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Dawnmist's Heart - Prologue

Dawnkit stood below a large rock, listening as the ThunderClan cats decided her fate. Was she to stay with ThunderClan, alongside Sunkit and Frogkit, or was she to leave?

"They have no right!" A pale brown tabby snarled. "Some of them are different Clans and the kits are half Clan!"

"I think we should let them," Dawnkit winced at the next speaker. A she-cat who was missing an eye and had several claws along her face stated thoughtfully. "They'd be useful to the Clan. Duskpelt is a great hunter, while Pineleaf has a great nose."

"What about Moonshadow then?" A brown tabby growled. "She's an elder. She'd just be another mouth to feed. And that's hard enough, this deep in leaf-bare!"

Moonshadow's perfect, and I love her for what she is! So, take that, frog-faces! Dawnpaw longed to say her mind, but she was afraid she'd get kicked out.

"I've heard the voices of my senior warriors. Deputy, Luckyheart, what is your opinion?" A handsome orange tom said in a voice that rang out above the raucous. This must be the leader, Firestar.

A golden-brown she-cat pondered the question. *Luckyheart.* Dawnkit thought. "I believe we should let them in. Brightheart is right. But Duskpelt and Pineleaf must hunt for Moonshadow. Our warriors aren't going to waste energy for an elder that isn't even ThunderClan."

Moonshadow can hunt for herself, thank you very much! Dawnkit bit her tongue, waiting.

She saw Goldenperch let out a breath of relief.

"Fine." Firestar flicked his tail idly. "Moonshadow, you may go to

the elders' den. Longtail, Graystripe, Sandstorm and Dustpelt will show you around the den. Brightheart? Can you please show Duskpelt and Pineleaf our territory and the best places to hunt? In fact, it'd be great if you could take them on a border patrol with some other warriors too."

Dawnkit zoned out. She tapped Sunkit on the back with her tail.

"Come on!" she hissed. "Let's play!"

"I'll meet you at that den over there," Sunkit replied. "I just need to get Frogkit."

Dawnkit headed towards the huge rock, sliding between legs and bodies. She reached the den and entered it, her jaw falling open. Sunkit and Frogkit came in too.

"Amazing," Dawnkit uttered.

"Agreed," Frogkit replied.

They were staring at a vast den with a large bedding of moss. Bones of small prey was littered in the corner.

"Perhaps we shouldn't be here," Frogkit mewed tentatively.

"We're staying!" Dawnkit retorted angrily.

"I agree with Frogkit," Sunkit interrupted. "Sorry, Dawnkit."

The white-gray tom and the light ginger she-cat left, leaving the ginger she-cat by her own. Her tail flicked about sadly. Slowly, she padded outside, blinking in the sunlight, to hear the Clan calling Luckyheart's name.

"Luckyheart! Luckyheart!"

"Firestar, I am honored. I respect your wishes and I will always ask for your advice when I am in times of need. I release you from your leaders' duties." Luckyheart dipped her head to the wise tom. "Tonight, I will travel to the Moonpool with Jayfeather." The golden-brown tabby mewed respectfully.

What's happening? Dawnkit wondered. She quickly found her littermates. "What's happening?"

"Luckyheart's the new leader!" Frogkit answered excitedly.

"Luckyheart! Luckyheart!" the Clan continued its' call.

Goldenperch murmured something to Luckyheart, the new leader looked flustered.

"I say these words before StarClan, so that the spirits of our warrior ancestors may hear and approve of my choice. The new deputy of ThunderClan will be Brackenfur." Luckyheart declared.

"Brackenfur? Are you sure he's the right cat for the job?" Someone from the crowd sneered.

Dawnkit's head spun. There were so many cats!

"I am." Luckyheart growled.

"How can we trust you?" It was Moonshadow!

Moonshadow? She's not rude!

"Moonshadow!" Sunkit hissed. "Stop! You're going to get kicked out!"

"How dare you, you piece of crow-food eating, fox-hearted mouse-brain!" A white tom's voice drowned Sunkit's. He lashed his tail angrily. "We accepted you into the Clan and you're being overly suspicious of us!"

Luckyheart laid her tail gently on the white tom's shoulder. "Peace, my warrior. Moonshadow has a point. You might not trust me!" she called to the cats. "But I will do my best to lead you through good times and bad times. If I had half the courage, loyalty and wisdom of Firestar, then I will be a good leader."

Dawnkit zoned out again and started playing with a puddle of water. She dipped a paw in, then took it out, delighted by the ripples. Dawnkit stretched her paw further, lost her balance, and

fell in the puddle. It was small, but she was a very small kit. Embarrassed, Dawnkit climbed out and shook her fur out. Her fur was caked in thick, wet mud.

Dimly, she noticed the Clan taking up the chant again, but she didn't care. Shuddering against the coldness, she sought comfort with her mother and littermates, breathing a little sigh of happiness.

This is where I'm meant to be.

Dawnmist's Heart - Chapter 1

Dawnpaw was in the shadows of the apprentices' den, pretending to nap. She'd tripped over her paw in training that day, and Jayfeather had ordered her to rest. She shuffled around in her nest, unable to be comfortable. The seeds that the medicine cat have given her were helping, but the pain was keeping her awake. It was the first day of leaf-bare today, and greencough had spread through the camp so fast she couldn't even keep count.

Something built up in Dawnpaw's throat. She scratched at it with sheathed claws, coughing slightly. Panic shot through her. *Do I have greencough?*

Dawnpaw staggered out of the den, coughing more heavily now.

A black shape emerged behind her. His bright blue eyes were open and were worried. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine, Demonpaw, thanks." Dawnpaw gritted her teeth and continued on her way to the medicine den, ignoring the pain in her paw.

"You're not fine, look at you, you're coughing!" Demonpaw nagged.

"I'm FINE!" she hissed. "Leave me alone, you arrogant furball!"

In the dark, Dawnpaw could see Demonpaw smiling. "You need to see Jayfeather. I could take you."

"Where in StarClan do you think I'm going, Demonpaw? Wait- did you just ask me on a date?" Dawnpaw stopped in her tracks.

"Maybe...if you want it to be so," Demonpaw purred.

Dawnpaw coughed.

"You really should go to Jayfeather,"

"I'm going there, you psychopathic furball," Dawnpaw nearly yowled.

"What's this?" Jayfeather appeared at the entrance of the medicine den, exhausted. "Another one? Who is it this time?" His blind blue eyes flicked between the two of them.

"It's Dawnpaw, sir." Demonpaw choked out.

Jayfeather sighed. "Larkpaw! I need you to check Dawnpaw."

Larkpaw hobbled out of the medicine den and examined her.

Get off me! Dawnpaw tried to growl but coughed instead.

"Greencough," Larkpaw sighed as well.

"Have you got any catmint for her?" Demonpaw's bright blue eyes looked over the two medicine cats.

"We're too low on catmint, Demonpaw. We need to save it for the cats who are closer to death. And anyways, why do you care so much? Dawnpaw isn't your sister." Jayfeather snapped.

"I um...I care about her because she's in my Clan," Demonpaw stuttered.

Dawnpaw stifled a purr. She had never heard Demonpaw stutter before.

"Well? Leave!" Jayfeather glared at Demonpaw. "You're going to get infected too!"

"Right. Sorry." Demonpawe muttered, casting a long look at Dawnpaw before leaving.

"Now, you've got weak greencough, so you can stay in the abandoned Twoleg nest. That's where we're keeping whitecough patients and weak greencough patients." Larkpaw led Dawnpaw to the abandoned Twoleg nest.

"What about my training?" Dawnpaw said in between coughs.

"I'm sure Luckystar is busy enough as it is," Larkpaw mewed briskly. "But you'll catch up."

"Okay." Dawnpaw agreed sullenly.

"Here's your new nest," Larkpaw pointed out a messy and small nest in the abandoned Twoleg nest.

Dawnpaw wrinkled her nose. The smell of greencough was overwhelming. She lay on the nest, her paw aching and her lungs burning. Slowly, she drifted into sleep.

Dawnpaw blinked open her eyes to see bright blue eyes staring back at her.

"Aargh!" she scrambled back, shocked. "Why would you *do* that, you piece of fox-dung?"

"I wanted to greet you," Demonpaw replied smoothly.

"Can't your mentor control you?" Dawnpaw retorted.

"Don't think so," the tom flicked his ears back.

"Stop that. Now if you must be here, then I want to talk about you stuttering last night." Dawnpaw flicked her tail on his mouth to stop him from talking.

"I did not!" Demonpaw protested.

"Oh yes you did! I heard you!" Dawnpaw returned.

"Fine." Demonpaw muttered. "I admit I stuttered a bit."

"Ha! You admit it!" Dawnpaw crowed. Beside her, Snowpaw shifted in her sleep but didn't wake.

"Shush," Demonpaw teased.

"Why, you...crow-food eater!" Dawnpaw yowled.

Snowpaw woke with a start, looking annoyed. "Trying to sleep," she growled.

Dawnpaw's ears went flat on her head. "You mange-pelt!" she hissed at Demonpaw.

"I have something for you," Demonpaw said shyly. "Come outside."

"I'll be glad for fresh air," Dawnpaw said slyly, ignoring Demonpaw.

She strode outside and waited for the black tom.

"Look here," Demonpaw pointed at a blade of grass.

"Yeah? It's grass. You want me to worship it or what?" Dawnpaw purred.

"No. It's catmint. I stole it for you." Demonpaw offered it to her.

"I..." Dawnpaw didn't know what to say. "Thank you."

She took the catmint and ate it. Immediately, her dry throat eased, and her lungs stopped burning.

"I also brought you a rabbit," Demonpaw held up a dead body of a plump rabbit.

Dawnpaw quickly ate it. "Thank you." She repeated.

"I should go," Demonpaw broke the silence.

"Yeah, me too. I should go back into the cramped Twoleg nest that stinks of sickness," Dawnpaw tried for a joke.

Demonpaw didn't purr. He met her eyes, dead serious. "I'm bringing more catmint tomorrow, whether you like it or not. I care about you too much to let you die to a sickness like greencough."

WHAT? What did he just say?

Her thoughts were confused, but her mouth just said, "I'll see you then."

It was when she was back in her nest when it finally .

Demonpaw just said he liked me.

Dawnpaw and Demonpaw's meetings kept going on until Dawnpaw was almost cured.

"Thanks, Demonpaw. I don't know how much I owe you," she said weakly, unconsciously twining her tail with his.

Demonpaw purred loudly. "I'd do it all again for in a heartbeat."

"Demonpaw, over these few days, I've been feeling...different about you." Dawnpaw said softly.

"I think I've always felt this way for you." The tom replied just as quietly. "Ever since the Clan voted to let you stay."

A faint memory stirred in her. The day when Duskpelt had brought her to the Clan. "I was very young. And reckless. And a good bit braver. I can't even say what I feel anymore."

"You're still brave," Demonpaw shuffled his paws.

"And you're still the annoying furball that accompanied me to the medicine den." Dawnpaw shot.

"I've never felt like this before...never about someone before." Demonpaw whispered.

"Me neither," Dawnpaw admitted. "Hide!" Rustling pawsteps had caught her attention.

Demonpaw ducked down instinctively, hiding the catmint and rabbit underneath a bush.

Larkpaw strode over, and she definitely wasn't purring. "I heard two voices."

"Demonpaw was here earlier. He just left." Dawnpaw mewed

confidently.

"I'm sorry for doubting you." Larkpaw's green eyes darted around peevishly.

She turned around and left, her head flicking back occasionally as she strode back to the Twoleg nest.

Demonpaw left the bush, purring. "She didn't even question you!"

"It's my natural aura of obedience," Dawnpaw lifted her chin haughtily.

"Yeah right," Demonpaw responded. "Like you could boss a kit."

"Fish-face!" Dawnpaw snarled. She nipped him on the ear.

Demonpaw drew back, rubbing his ear. "Fine, fine," he muttered. "Dawnstar."

"I have to go back," Dawnpaw rubbed Demonpaw's face. "Bye."

"Bye." Demonpaw licked her ear tenderly.

Dawnpaw licked up the rest of the catmint and the rabbits and left Demonpaw in the thick undergrowth.

"Where've you been?" Dawnpaw flinched back as she saw Jayfeather's gray muzzle instead of Larkleaf's silver one. "I've been looking for you for ages!"

"I was walking."

"Do you want to be cured or what?" Jayfeather snapped.

He sniffed her breath tentatively. "You're lucky that you aren't sick anymore. Your greencough seems to be very weak. Good job."

Dawnpaw managed a small smile. It wasn't Jayfeather's treatment that had made her better. It had been Demonpaw's catmint.

"Can I return to training?" she said the first thing on her mind.

"Yes, I suppose so," Jayfeather grumbled. "Take it easy for the first few days. There's a Gathering tomorrow night. Luckystar should be announcing it soon."

Dawnpaw walked through the forest with a spring in her step. Between back to training and Demonpaw, her life couldn't be better.

NOTE: The events in this chapter are slightly different according to DarkClan's Attack.

Dawnmist's Heart - Chapter 2

"Luckystar!" Dawnpaw bounded up to her mentor. "I can continue training. Jayfeather cleared me."

"That's great!" Luckystar purred, running her tail along Dawnpaw's back. "We'll work twice as hard to cover up for what you've missed, so you can have your warrior ceremony at the same time as your littermates."

"Thanks!" Dawnpaw purred back.

She followed her mentor to the training area. "We'll start with battle training," Luckystar announced. "I'm going to teach you the leap-and-hold. This is an easy technique that is useful for when you're facing a cat that is larger than you."

"Okay." Dawnpaw nodded.

"You leap onto your opponents back, then hold on with your claws. They'll be injured and will try and roll or shape you off. The way to counter that is to jump off and swipe at them in mid-air." Luckystar ordered. "Fight me."

Dawnpaw leapt at Luckystar, aiming for her exposed belly. Luckystar sidestepped, then raked her sheathed claws down Dawnpaw's side. Dawnpaw winced but quickly saw an opportunity. She dropped to the ground, pretending she had been injured, and as Luckystar stalked towards her, Dawnpaw sprang up and grabbed hold of her mentor's belly fur.

Luckystar winced and attempted the front paw blow but missed. Dawnpaw let go of Luckystar's belly fur as Luckystar had grabbed her scruff and shaken her as hard as she could. Dawnpaw went limp again and alarmed, the golden-brown she-cat paused. Feeling her grip go slack, Dawnpaw wriggled free, and while Luckystar was disorientated, she jumped on her back, falling a bit due to sheathed

claws but hanging on, nonetheless.

Luckystar rolled around, trying to squash Dawnpaw. The ginger she-cat leapt off, then swiped at Luckystar's ears in mid-air.

"Stop," Luckystar commanded. "That was good. You easily overpowered me. We can talk about your technique though."

Breathless, Dawnpaw said in between pants, "Got it."

"That's all for today," Luckystar had obviously noticed her exhaustion. "You're still weak from the sickness. Go back to camp and take some prey. You've done well."

Dawnpaw dipped her head respectfully and pushed her tired body back towards the camp. She looked around for Demonpaw, but neither him nor Poppyfrost were in camp. They must've gone out training.

She chose a vole from the prey pile; Dawnpaw had only eaten rabbits lately. Devouring the creature in a few bites, she groomed her fur and waited for Demonpaw. Soon enough, Demonpaw came back into the camp, followed by Poppyfrost. Echopaw and Hollyleaf were also with them. While Echopaw and Hollyleaf were laid back and relaxed, satisfied with their hunt, Poppyfrost carried nothing and was hissing in annoyance.

"Poppyfrost! What happened?" Luckystar bounded down from her den.

"This a-apprentice! This dunghearted apprentice!" Poppyfrost snarled in the most hostile tone Luckystar had ever heard her use.

What happened?

"Chill." Brackenfur came back from the warriors' den where he had been resting. "Explain it." Brackenfur ordered the upset mentor.

Dawnpaw watched Demonpaw with worried eyes. The black tom had always been reckless, but what had happened this time?

Poppyfrost growled. "Firstly, he questions my leadership. Then,

when we go hunting, I was stalking the fattest bird ever! But this fox-hearted apprentice pushes me, quite on purpose, and the bird flaps off. That bird could've fed all the elders, and that's rare, this deep in leaf-bare!"

He didn't. Did he? Lately, he's been getting more and more bold and reckless. StarClan, did I *do that?*

"Demonpaw. Care to explain yourself?" Luckystar mewed coldly.

Demonpaw growled back at his leader. "No! I don't have any need to explain myself." He lashed his tail angrily.

"Demonpaw! You can't take that tone with your leader!" Dawnpaw hissed to Demonpaw.

Demonpaw shook his head angrily, shaking off her advice.

"Demonpaw!" Goldenperch clouted her kit on the head with her tail. "How many times do I have to teach you respect? Even a kit could do better, you stupid furball!"

"This mange-ridden flea-pelt is a horrible apprentice and mouse-hearted cat!" Poppyfrost snapped.

Most of the Clan had come out from their dens or stood up from where they had been resting or eating to view the scene.

"Poppyfrost, I believe you," Luckystar dipped her head to the warrior. "But I cannot punish Demonpaw with only one witness."

Poppyfrost let out a wail of distress and anger and stormed to the warriors' den.

Poor Poppyfrost. She's a nice she-cat. Demonpaw shouldn't have done this.

"Demonpaw. I'll give you one more chance." Luckystar looked at the apprentice sternly.

"Why would I want a chance?" Demonpaw retorted.

"Stop it!" Dawnpaw hissed again, only to be ignored.

"Demonpaw, go get something from the fresh-kill pile and give that to Poppyfrost." Goldenperch urged.

"Yes," Luckystar agreed. "Do that."

"Why should I?" Demonpaw snorted. He swept towards the pile behind Luckystar, banging into her as he passed. Demonpaw also batted Luckystar hardly with a powerful forepaw, although his claws were sheathed.

Luckystar was knocked back into the ground, sprawling. She stood up slowly, spitting out dirt Luckystar let out a low growl.

She's not going to let that go easily. What has happened to my life? Earlier today, it was perfect. And now...Demonpaw, what have you done?

Dawnpaw stood up. She walked over to where Demonpaw was staying, near the apprentice den.

Luckystar emerged from her den, anger still clear in her eyes. "Let all cats old enough to hunt their own prey gather here beneath the Highledge for a Clan meeting!"

Dawnpaw followed Demonpaw to the Highledge. The black tom still had refused to talk to her.

"I'm sure most of you have heard about Demonpaw. He is trouble-making, greedy and selfish. I have found out that he has been sneaking food." Luckystar talked about how Demonpaw had snuck out catmint and rabbits. Dawnpaw's stomach dropped. This was because of *her*.

"He must be punished!" she yowled. "I shall blind him."

"No!" Goldenperch wailed.

"No!" Dawnpaw murmured.

"There's better news!" she caught the Clan's attention quickly. "I will

select the cats going to the Gathering right now."

Luckystar read off a list of cats before continuing her orders.

"Whitewing, lead a hunting patrol with the cats that are left behind. Brackenfur, organize some border patrols. I want the fresh-kill pile full when we get back." Luckystar ordered. "We'll leave now."

Dawnpaw watched as her leader and her deputy left the Clan and her eyes flicked back to Demonpaw, who was still angry and surly. For the first time ever, she admitted to herself she loved the tom.

What's happened to the tom I love?

NOTE: Like I said last time, Dawnpaw was only just supposed to become an apprentice, but I made a mistake about that ;-;

Dawnmist's Heart - Chapter 3

Dawnpaw shoved her head into her fur, pretending to be grooming. The Gathering patrol weren't just going to be sharing news. They would be debating Demonpaw's fate with the other Clans.

StarClan, if he gets exiled, protect him. Bring him back to me. Please. Dawnpaw prayed.

Dawnpaw had so much tension in her body; tail flicking back in forth, ears twitching every few heartbeats, eyes darting around warily. Every time her sharp ears picked up footsteps, she froze, assuming it'd be Luckystar and the others, with Demonpaw's fate.

Footsteps!

Dawnpaw jerked her head up. Her fur was shiny from consistent grooming. The moon shone overhead. Golden brown fur glittered at the entrance. *Luckystar!* For a moment, Dawnpaw's heart stopped and she panicked.

Demonpaw was in the apprentices' den, looking annoyed. He was under guard. "Can I be let out now?" he called.

Demonpaw, please, please, try behave.

"Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather here beneath the Highledge for a Clan meeting!" Luckystar yowled.

Dawnpaw followed the other apprentices to where they usually gathered. Demonpaw sat on his own, allowed out of the den for the trial.

"ShadowClan is hostile!" Luckystar announced. "But I have decided on a punishment."

Please. Spare him. Luckystar, I beg you.

"What is it?" Firestar seemed interested but his eyes were shadowed.

"In my day we didn't punish cats for being disrespectful."

Luckystar nodded respectfully to the retired leader. "Yes, you're right, Firestar. I suppose in your day, your Clanmates didn't steal food and medicine supplies for themselves."

"I ate food out of turn as an apprentice, once," Firestar recalled. "My punishment was to look after Yellowfang, who I had captured."

"But Demonpaw isn't even Clanborn! He was born a rogue. I'm going to send him into exile. I will also blind one of his eyes." Luckystar argued.

Dawnpaw noticed Goldenperch give a sob of relief. For what? Half blind wasn't a pleasant way to live.

Lionblaze, Foxleap, Dovewing and Brackenfur took hold of Demonpaw's legs, holding him down. The black tom tried to escape, hissing.

"Birchfall, Beetlenose! Help them!" Luckystar commanded as he almost escaped.

Beetlenose seized Demonpaw's head and thrust it onto the ground while Birchfall held down his flailing hindquarters.

Luckystar winced as she stepped down from the Highledge. "Everyone, out of the way unless you're holding him down." She meowed.

Goldenperch didn't. "I'm watching." She insisted.

Luckystar thought about it then gave a slight nod. "You have a right." She admitted.

Dawnpaw stuck her chin up and padded next to Goldenperch. She nuzzled the older cat, giving her silent support.

Dawnpaw watched Luckystar lift a forepaw up into the air.

No! Stop! She wanted to yowl.

Luckystar slashed it down into Demonpaw's right eye. He gave a wail of pain. It was heartbreaking for Dawnpaw. "Demonpaw..." she murmured pitifully.

After what seemed like several lifetimes to Dawnpaw, Luckystar stepped back and she viewed the injured cat. "That'll be enough." She decided. "Demonpaw, leave the camp at once. If we find you in our territory by tomorrow when the sun rises, all warriors have permission to chase you out."

I'll never chase you out.

Dawnpaw tentatively looked at Demonpaw. His right eye was milky and glassy. Blood trickled down from his eye onto his shoulders. He gave a small snarl then left the camp.

They really did it. They injured him. Dawnpaw hissed in frustration, anger and sadness. *My beloved Demonpaw.*

Dawnpaw barely registered the two ceremonies that lightened the mood; Larkpaw and Snowpaw's ceremonies, making them Larkleaf and Snowfall.

How dare they celebrate. This should be a sad occasion. We're losing a valuable warrior...and a faithful mate.

Dawnpaw noticed Goldenperch's fur bristling. She moved next to the grieving mother. "I miss him too."

Liar. I don't miss him. I need him. Will I ever be happy again?

"S-so you two were mates?"

"We were going to be," Dawnpaw muttered. "I was sick with greencough this leaf-bare, remember? He brought me catmint to eat. He saved me from death." She looked up with pleading eyes. "Goldenperch, you've *got* to help me get him back in the Clan! I love him, but I can't leave my littermates to be with him! But I know he's waiting for me!"

Goldenperch said at last. "Maybe. I'll think about it overnight. But right now, my exhausted body isn't going to take any deeper

thinking."

"Thank you." Dawnpaw let out a sigh of relief. Maybe Goldenperch could bring Demonpaw back into the Clan.

"I'm not promising anything," Goldenperch warned.

Furball.

"I know." Dawnpaw blinked brightly, trying to cheer Goldenperch up. "But I'm still grateful." She let her fur lie flat and bounded off.

Dawnpaw approached the entrance of the apprentices' den. It seemed empty without Demonpaw. A scream cut through the air.

Help!" Lightningpaw was shrieking at the top of her lungs.

Dawnpaw ran into the den and saw strange cats battling the other apprentices. She quickly went back to back with Frogpaw while Lightningpaw and Thunderpaw had curled up together with claws unsheathed.

Goldenperch had evidently heard the scream, since she came in running next.

"Get back up!" Goldenperch snapped at Sunpaw. "Go find some more warriors! We're under attack!"

Sunpaw gave her a terrified look before dashing out of the den.

"Echopaw! We'll fight together!" Goldenperch yowled.

Echopaw gave her a confident nod. Dawnpaw wished she could've been that confident, but she didn't have time to dwell on that. A brown tabby was swiping at her face. Dawnpaw quickly ducked the blow and Frogpaw attacked by landing his paw on the tabby's head.

Dawnpaw heard Goldenperch give a small gasp of shock. What happened? Dodging another blow, she risked a glance around.

"Traitor!" A cat caterwauled and the other invaders echoed.

"Traitor! You took your kits and left alongside the other traitors!" the brown tabby snarled.

"What does he mean?" Frogpaw wriggled out from behind Dawnpaw.

"Darkstripe means that Goldenperch once belonged to our Clan, DarkClan, but left to be with this Clan of fox-faces!" The leader purred.

DarkClan?

"DarkClan is evil! That's why I left. But it entices you. Don't join them!" Goldenperch urged.

"Enough!" The leader swiped at Goldenperch's muzzle, but she dodged and flipped over the bigger cat to land on his back.

"Reinforcements are here!" Sunpaw arrived, breathless.

The DarkClan cats looked around wildly and seeing a crowd of cats swarm into the den, fled in terror.

The next few heartbeats passed in a blur. Luckystar and some other cats were doubting Goldenperch for being in DarkClan previously and others were forgiving her. Jayfeather and Larkleaf were moving around the cats, checking them for wounds and applying herbs.

Dawnpaw muttered thanks before finding her nest among the chaos of the den. She curled up on it, her tail balanced delicately on her nose. Drifting off to sleep, she had nightmares of Demonpaw. He seemed to be nuzzling a light yellow she-cat. Jealousy flooded in her, but a call woke her up.

"Let all cats old enough to hunt their own prey gather here beneath the Highledge for a Clan meeting!" Luckystar yowled.

What now?

Dawnmist's Heart - Chapter 4

Dawnpaw shook the sleep off and padded out of the den.

Luckystar described the training sessions and which senior warrior would help with which. "I want Echopaw, Hollyleaf, Foxleap and Frogpaw to go out with Goldenperch first. Dawnpaw, Sunpaw, Rosepetal and I will go with Goldenperch next. Thunderpaw and Lightningpaw, go with your mentors and Brackenfur to battle training. Lionblaze, take out a patrol to play out a fight."

Echopaw, Frogpaw, Hollyleaf and Foxleap gave a brief nod before heading out of the camp.

Dawnpaw didn't hear, but Luckystar and Goldenperch exchanged a few words.

Luckystar addressed the Clan members still in camp. "Brackenfur, organize some hunting patrols and a border patrol. We mustn't let this get to us."

"Sure," Brackenfur replied.

"And I want Hazeltail, Dovewing and Larkleaf to go to WindClan and tell them about this threat. Jayfeather, Whitewing and Toadstep can go to ShadowClan. I shall go to RiverClan with Duskpelt and Pineleaf." Luckystar finished.

Dawnpaw trotted to her favorite bush and selected a mouse to eat. A battle. That was scary. And so soon after Demonpaw leaving.

StarClan, I can't lose anyone else. Please make sure Duskpelt, Frogpaw or Sunpaw don't die. Please.

"Are you alright?" Luckystar had appeared at her side.

Dawnpaw shook out her ginger fur and curled her tail up. "I will do my best to fight for my Clan."

Luckystar dipped her head. "Good. But be careful. Battles can be dangerous." She warned.

"I will." Dawnpaw promised.

She lounged around, waiting for Luckystar to come back from RiverClan. Finally, Luckystar arrived.

"Dawnpaw! Find Sunpaw and Rosepetal and tell them to meet us in the training hollow. I'll fetch Goldenperch." Luckystar ordered.

"Okay." Dawnpaw replied, dashing off. Sunpaw and Rosepetal were already in the training hollow, so she waited for Luckystar and Goldenperch there.

At the training hollow, Dawnpaw watched Goldenperch demonstrate the most commonly used move by DarkClan cats. Rosepetal stood in front of her, looking uneasy. When the older she-cat lunged at the golden she-cat, Goldenperch ducked the bite and whipped her body around so suddenly, she was the one lunging. Then, she closed her jaws delicately around Rosepetal's throat.

"If I was a real DarkClan cat, Rosepetal would be dead." She announced solemnly.

Kind of cool. Dawnpaw thought internally but let out a cry of shock.

"This is how you can stop it from killing you." Goldenperch continued. She flipped Rosepetal around, so she was the one on the ground. Using a forepaw, she batted Rosepetal's jaws away and they closed on thin air. She thrust her neck forward, nipping Rosepetal's ear. With amazing speed, she rolled out of the way as Rosepetal tried another bite. Goldenperch raked her claws on her flank while she was distracted. Pushing her over, Goldenperch went for a last blow. Victorious, she nodded to the cats watching. "Most DarkClan cats are cocky and power-hungry. They want revenge. They don't follow the warrior code. *They will kill you*."

Dawnpaw nodded, taking it in. She partnered with Sunpaw. Lunging at her sister, Sunpaw ducked. Dawnpaw staggered, trying to find her balance, but it was too late. Sunpaw had already closed

her jaws on her neck.

"Swap over!" Luckystar commanded.

In an instant, Sunpaw was lunging at Dawnpaw. Exhausted, Dawnpaw didn't have the energy to dodge, so rolled on the ground instead. Sunpaw, like Dawnpaw earlier, lost balance. Finding sudden energy, Dawnpaw raked her pads on Sunpaw's flank and nipped the fur around her neck tenderly.

After the training session, the five exhausted cats trooped back to camp. Dawnpaw grabbed a blackbird that the hunting parties had brought back and shared it with Sunpaw. That was when she heard Luckystar's summons.

"We have news." Luckystar looked down at the Clan. "Cloudtail and Brightheart are retiring to the elders' den."

"Cloudtail! Brightheart!" Dawnpaw cheered somberly.

"They have earned their rest. Now." Luckystar cleared her throat. "Some of you may know, but Longtail died today. He was old and it was his time."

He was old anyway. Dawnpaw thought with a dismissive flick of her ears. It was little mean, but it had been the pale tabby's time.

"We will sit vigil for him tonight. And remember, he watches us from StarClan now." Luckystar reminded the Clan gently.

Dawnpaw left Longtail's grieving kin and headed to her den.

Tossing and turning, Dawnpaw couldn't sleep. Her nightmares from the night before were still bugging her. Finally, she decided to take a walk around her territory.

Upon reaching the Twolegplace border, she saw a dark shape. A *familiar* dark shape. One with bright blue eyes- *eye*.

"Demonpaw." She breathed.

Suddenly afraid, she turned tail and bolted back to the safer

territory of her den. Squashed in between Frogpaw and Sunpaw, she tried to calm her heartbeat.

Why's Demonpaw back? I thought he was exiled.

Just as she was about to fall asleep, she was called upon for duty. She ran with Luckystar, . Goldenperch, Hollyleaf, Larkleaf and Fogwhisker to the Gathering island, where a she-cat had sent a distress call of help.

Mistystar?

Dawnpaw slashed, bit and clawed every bit of DarkClan pelt she could, but the cats wouldn't leave. Only when Brackenfur brought their second patrol did DarkClan seem slightly hesitant.

"This is only the beginning!" a red-orange tabby purred, his eyes alight with wild laughter. "DarkClan will rule!"

Dawnpaw watched Redstorm and Luckystar duel, her mouth open in shock. Never had she seen so much death. Fogwhisker had died before her eyes, for StarClan's sake!

Luckystar fell to the ground. A cat yowled. "She's losing a life!"

Dawnpaw winced and pretty much just cowered on the ground, terrified. At the age of 10 moons, she wasn't ready for a vicious battle where the opponent fought to kill!

Duskpelt, mother, where are you?

Soon, the battle died down; the DarkClan cats fleeing again. Dawnpaw emerged from her hiding spot to see Fogwhisker and Brackenfur's bodies laying limp on the ground.

Brackenfur. StarClan, no!

Dawnpaw followed the patrol back to the camp, where Luckystar performed the deputy ceremony.

"Goldenperch!" Dawnpaw cheered half-heartedly with the other cats.

Thunderpaw, Lightningpaw and Echopaw were then made warriors; Thunderstorm, Lightningstrike and Echoflight.

After the ceremony, Echoflight strode over to Dawnpaw.

"Look, Dawnpaw, I'm *glad* that Demonpaw's exiled. You and he were growing too close. It's not good to mate with a thief and a traitor." Echoflight hissed. "Now, goodbye. I have a vigil to attend to."

Glad?

"You fox-heart!" Dawnpaw hissed back.

Echoflight growled in her throat but joined Thunderstorm and Lightningstrike in the clearing.

Echoflight wishes Demonpaw were exiled. Is that true for all cats? Do they really believe he's vicious, mean and a thief?

Looking around the clearing, Dawnpaw realized no cats had been sad that Demonpaw was leaving, except Goldenperch and *her*.

Dawnmist's Heart - Chapter 5

Dawnpaw trotted behind Goldenperch as they went to check out what the dawn patrol had found. Dawnpaw's heart pulsed quickly. A scent had made its way into the air. Goldenperch stiffened. She had smelt it too.

"Demonpaw!" Dawnpaw cried.

Demonpaw was already battling Goldenperch, both cats angry.

"Demonpaw! Wait! I need to talk to you!" Dawnpaw struggled to make her voice heard.

Demonpaw's ears twitched but he ignored her, *again*.

Anger flooded her, but before she could strike, Demonpaw had taken his DarkClan friend and fled manically.

"Demonpaw ..." Dawnpaw mewed sadly.

"Demonclaw now." Goldenperch mewed back.

"Demonclaw." Dawnpaw said. It sounded strange...as if the tom she loved had been changed. No, not changed, distorted into another cat. An evil cat.

Dawnpaw stayed by the border until dusk, when she decided to finally get up. Maybe it was because her body was limp with pain, or maybe it was the simple fact she was starving.

Before she could move, ginger fur caught her eye, on the WindClan side of the border. Who was it?

A handsome ginger cat came out of the darkness. "I am Foxclaw," he said in a deep voice. "I've been watching you for a while. And I can't live without you. I want to be your mate."

Joy fluttered in Dawnpaw's heart. Foxclaw was the nicer version of Demonclaw. "I agree."

The next few days, Dawnpaw met up with Foxclaw in the moonlight every night at the Gathering island. Today was the sixth day.

"Hi, Dawnpaw," Foxclaw purred.

"Foxclaw," Dawnpaw nuzzled his cheek.

Suddenly, a black shape jumped off a tree.

"D-Demonclaw?" Dawnpaw stuttered.

"You *know* this cat?" Foxclaw looked around. "He's one of the Dark Forest cats that raided our camp!"

"Demonclaw! Why did you do that?" Dawnpaw mewed reproachfully.

Demonclaw purred, unsheathing his claws quickly and slashed them at Foxclaw's throat. Dawnpaw saw malice glitter in his eyes.

Foxclaw! No! How could you!

"Demonclaw! You killed my mate!" she gasped, grief welling in her throat.

"*I* was your mate!" Demonclaw felt his rage rise and his temper burn. "I was the one you were supposed to love! I was exiled out of the Clan for *you*!"

"I-I'm sorry, Demonclaw, but I thought you weren't coming back," Dawnpaw murmured. "Can we still be mates?"

"NEVER!" Demonclaw roared. He slashed his claws across Dawnpaw's face, leaving a series of ugly claw marks. "Let that be a reminder," he said, breathing hard. "of the cat you rejected and forgot."

"I'm sorry!" Dawnpaw cried, but the tom was already racing off.

Demonclaw's gotten more vicious and stronger. If he's allied with DarkClan, maybe I really should join him.

When she walked back into the camp, Luckystar had evidently called a Clan meeting.

"The second battle patrol will be made up of Birchfall, Cinderheart, Duskpelt, Hollyleaf, Ivypool, Lionblaze, Poppyfrost, Toadstep, Thunderstorm and Dawnpaw. Squirrelflight will lead this patrol." Luckystar was saying.

Dawnpaw quickly slid in between Sunpaw and Frogpaw. "What's happening?" she hissed.

"DarkClan's attacking. These are our plans." Frogpaw hissed back.

"Dawnpaw and Sunpaw, you have a special job." Luckystar continued.

Dawnpaw lifted her ears in interest. Was she about to be sent to find Demonclaw?

"Really?" Sunpaw gasped.

"It will be your job to bring any seriously wounded cats from your battle patrols back to the camp. And you will also be acting as a messenger if you are outnumbered badly. For the messenger patrol, Leafpool has experience with healing, so she will take some herbs with her just in case they run into an injured cat." Luckystar continued briskly.

Oh. Messengers. Hooray.

Dawnpaw couldn't sleep that night. She kept seeing Foxclaw's face when he died, Demonclaw's malicious eyes. The blue eyes that used to hypnotize her, they were gone. The bright, positive cat she had known was dead. Instead, a murderer had taken his place.

Suddenly, Dawnpaw's stomach heaved. She ran outside to the dirtplace, pain flooding in her.

What's happening?

A small bundle of fur slid onto the hard stones. *A kit?*

It's ginger fur resembled Foxclaw so closely, and it's beautiful blue eyes resembled Demonclaw's old eyes.

I can't believe it. Foxclaw left me a kit.

Dawnpaw licked it vigorously, willing it to come to life, but it lay limp, it's blue eyes unseeing and it's fur dull.

It's dead. Foxclaw left me a kit, while Demonclaw killed it. It was born too early.

"Demonclaw!" she raised her voice to a yowl.

With one sunrise left until the Final Battle, Dawnpaw noticed her mother heading towards her.

"Mother? What is it?" Dawnpaw asked tentatively.

"Demonclaw wants to see you tonight. On the border of our territory, near the Twolegplace." Duskpelt didn't meet her in the eye.

"That's great!" Dawnpaw stifled a purr. "Thanks, mother."

Dawnpaw strode over the border, hid in a bush and waited. Soon, the familiar black pelt came. "There you are." She stood up.

"Dawnpaw," she noticed Demonclaw had to force the words out.

"What is it? What do you want?" Dawnpaw didn't meet his eyes.

"We should talk," he mewed curtly.

"Yeah, we should," Dawnpaw agreed hesitantly.

Short chapter rip- I couldn't find enough things to put in this chapter :((

Dawnmist's Heart - Chapter 6

"I'm sorry," Dawnpaw blurted. "I should've stayed loyal to you! I remember how much you did for me, stealing the food and catmint just for me."

What's happening to me?

"Yeah," Demonclaw muttered. "I was exiled for you. I lost an *eye* for you, remember?" he shoved his right eye into her face.

I'm sorry!

Dawnpaw winced. "Look, I'm sorry for loving Foxclaw. Did you have to kill him?"

"I did." Demonclaw growled. "No one, Dawnpaw, *no one* is disloyal to me. I should kill you right now!"

"No! Don't!" Dawnpaw backed away.

Why did Demonclaw want to kill her?

Luckily, Demonclaw didn't advance.

"I was kidding," Demonclaw said eventually.

"Good," Dawnpaw relaxed. "I want to be mates again," she murmured.

I don't. You killed Foxclaw.

"I do too," He admitted.

Demonclaw slashed his claws on the ground, gouging deep marks in the mud.

What's happened to you? You have so much rage inside. Let it out, Demonclaw. I won't stop you. Maybe this'll make you a better cat.

Another mark.

Hesitantly, Dawnpaw curled up next to him.

Dawnpaw felt something splatter her and opened one sleepy eye. The deep gouges Demonclaw was making kept going on her. She let out a small mew of protest but didn't argue further.

"YEOOOW!" Demonclaw roared.

No, he's not okay.

Without thinking, Dawnpaw reached up to touch noses with Demonclaw like they did in the past.

"Are you feeling better?" Dawnpaw looked up at him.

"I'm so confused, Dawnpaw!" Demonclaw yowled. "I loved you, but we were separated, and now I don't love you like that anymore!"

Demonclaw...Oh, Demonclaw. You're definitely not okay.

"I feel like you're my sister, not my mate! I loved Leaf, but she's dead now, and how did she die? At *my* claws!"

Who's Leaf*? Exactly how many cats has he loved?*

Dawnpaw nuzzled him comfortingly. "It'll be okay," she whispered in his ear.

"Then came Spark..." Demonclaw stopped. "She has my kits. But we're not mates anymore. And why? Because I ruined it, *again*!"

Another one. He really hates me.

Dawnpaw glanced anxiously at the sun. It was almost dawn, and they had met at dusk.

"I have to go," she licked his cheek. "We're confined to camp until the Final Battle tomorrow,"

"Same." Demonclaw whispered back before running away, *again*.

Dawnpaw was left, heartbroken, with mud on her fur and Demonclaw's scent in her nostrils.

"I WAS A SELFISH CAT!" he yowled to the whole world, startling Goldenperch. "I only thought of myself. Which is why my death will fix things. Goodbye, Echoflight. Goodbye, Goldenperch. I'm sorry that your kit had to end up like this."

It was the day of the battle, and Demonclaw had challenged Echoflight to a fight. Demonclaw was losing. Dawnpaw could barely watch.

The black tom lay on the ground, bleeding, whispered something to the pale yellow she-cat next to him and lay limp.

"NO!" Dawnpaw yowled.

Her memories went back to the day he was exiled. She'd been so glad he hadn't died, but here he was, broken, bleeding and most certainly dead.

I should be happy. But I can't.

Dawnpaw barely registered the rest of the battle. She clawed, bit and fought with no happiness or energy at all. Bleeding from several wounds, she traipsed back to camp with the other ThunderClan cats.

After hearing mewling noises from the nursery, she ducked her head in to see why. Surprisingly, the light yellow she-cat was in there with two kits at her belly.

"Who are you?" she asked rudely, not caring what the cats thought of her anymore.

"Spark. I'm carrying Demonclaw's kits." She replied softly. "And I

can see that you loved him."

Dawnpaw froze, her thoughts running around in a circle.

So Demonclaw did *betray me as well.*

"I did," she mewed quietly. "And I still do. But he's dead."

"I know."

Dawnpaw twined her tail with Spark. Both she-cats were equally miserable, and both had suffered much grief.

"What will you name the kits?" Dawnpaw asked quietly.

"The brown she-cat is going to be called Autumn," Spark purred, a light sparkling in her eyes. "And the brown tabby will be called Wild Wind."

"I like it. I heard there was a third," Dawnpaw looked around.

"He died. He would've been Ember, for his ginger pelt."

"I'm so sorry. I had a kit die too." Dawnpaw choked up.

Sunpaw rushed in suddenly, her face alight with excitement. "Dawnpaw, we're having our warrior ceremony!"

Joy rushed inside her. "I'll be back, Spark."

Dawnpaw left the nursery and hurried outside, frantically grooming her pelt. Luckily, she'd had lots of practice.

"Next," Luckystar was purring. "Frogpaw, Dawnpaw, Sunpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect your Clan, even at the cost of your life?"

"I do." Frogpaw's mew was certain and bold. His green eyes glittered as he looked up to Luckystar.

"I do." Sunpaw nodded confidently.

"I do as well." Dawnpaw's let her eyes roam around the cats. Duskpelt; her mother. Pineleaf, her father. Moonshadow; who she considered a second mother. Goldenperch, the cat she shared a close bond with due to Demonclaw. And finally, her siblings. Sunpaw and Frogpaw.

"Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior name. Frogpaw, you will be Frogfern. Sunpaw, you will be Sunrise. Dawnpaw, you will be Dawnmist." Luckystar licked the three warriors before leading the chant.

"Frogfern! Sunrise! Dawnmist! Frogfern! Sunrise! Dawnmist!"

"According to Clan tradition, you will keep vigil tonight alongside the cats keeping vigil for our fallen warriors." Dawnmist zoned out for the rest of the meeting, thinking about her new name.

It's perfect. I love it.

Dawnmist went back to the nursery to see Spark. The she-cat was staring at the brambles.

"Are you okay?" she mewed.

"No. I've had too much grief in my life." Spark replied in a voice that was barely a whisper.

"Tell me about it," Dawnmist purred. "I've had a fair bit as well."

"Have your parents died before you opened your eyes? Have you had two true loves in your whole life; one depressed and one dead? Have you had your littermates killed before you even knew their names?" Spark was on her feet and yowling.

"I didn't know. I'm sorry." Dawnmist said comfortingly. "I didn't know you had so much grief."

"I don't like it. But I don't have a choice." Spark answered. "And I don't know how to deal with it. My mate killed, my heart shattered, and one of my kits dead before it lived. What do I do, Dawnmist?"

"I've suffered much too. My first mate exiled, now dead, my second

murdered, my only kit born dead. We're so similar." Dawnmist realized. "But I follow my heart."

"I understand." Spark managed a weak purr. "And you should go to your vigil now. It was nice meeting you."

Dawnmist dipped her head before padding out of the den.

"Time for our vigil." Sunrise and Frogfern had been waiting for her.

Dawnmist purred as she fell in step with her littermates. Although she'd had grief in her life, she could put her troubles behind her and start her life fresh over.

Dawnmist's Heart - Chapter 7

Dawnmist watched sadly as Spark ushered her kits closer to the camp entrance. It had been half a moon since the Final Battle, and Spark had decided to take her kits away from ThunderClan.

"I don't want my kits to become warriors." Spark had said defiantly.

Dawnmist and Spark had become strong friends over the half moon, and she was sad to see her go.

"Goodbye, Spark." Dawnmist twined tails with her friend for the last time. "I hope I see you again."

"You've been good company to me during my stay. Goodbye, Dawnmist." Spark licked her ear before taking her kits out of the camp.

Dawnmist took a different route to Spark, heading towards the Twolegplace. A lithe black she-cat was licking a paw on a fence.

"Hi," Dawnmist muttered. "Are you a kittypet?"

"Kittypet? Pfft. No. I'm a street cat." The she-cat replied.

"I'm a forest cat." Dawnmist informed.

"I've always wanted to meet one!" Salem said cheerfully.

The mood was catching. Dawnmist felt her spirits rising and her bad mood clearing.

"I've never seen a street cat either," Dawnmist purred. It had been the first time she'd purred since Spark had told her she was leaving, a few days ago.

"My whole family have been street cats. My great-grandmother was

the most wily and smart street cat ever!" Salem boasted.

"Wow! What was her name?" Dawnmist said enthusiastically.

"Salem too."

"Oh. Wow." Dawnmist said, her enthusiasm dampened a little.

"I know. That's why I don't tell cats a lot." Salem replied.

"Okay." Dawnmist shrugged.

Dawnmist got to know Salem a bit better and finally decided to go back to her Clan. The next few days passed quickly. She kept leaving the Clan for long periods at a time, keeping her mind off Spark and the kits.

Maybe I should become a street cat with Salem.

Dawnmist appreciated Salem's way of living, how they all protected each other but weren't close.

I don't want to love again. If I love, I'll only be hurt again.

On one meeting, Salem had brought some friends over. "This is Brick, Flower and Pike."

"Nice to meet you," Dawnmist had mewed back.

"Sup." Brick had lounged around lazily.

All the street cats were well fed and capable hunters. While they sometimes at kittypet food, they also hunted for themselves and scrounged food out of Twoleg scraps.

I want to join them, but I have kin in ThunderClan. I'd miss my family too much.

Dawnmist felt embarrassed that she was considering leaving, but ThunderClan didn't *feel* like the Clan she had known when she first joined. It had been welcoming, helpful and friendly. Now it was lonely and cold.

"I want to join you, but I need to be with my family," Dawnmist confessed one day.

"That's fine!" Salem said understandingly.

"Thanks for understanding. You might as well be my best friend." Dawnmist sighed, her head drooping.

"I'll always be here for you." Salem promised.

A/N- short chapter- i dunno i just dont want to write about dawnmist that much but i might as well finish this theres only a couple chapters left! next few chapters might be a little shorter but whatever. Ebony's Roots is out so check it out!

Dawnmist's Heart - Chapter 8

Dawnmist plodded behind Lightningstrike. She had been tasked by Goldenperch to look after Lightningstrike. She kept instinctively looking at the nursery for Spark's kits, but they were never there.

"Dawn! Dawn!" little voices snapped her out of her head.

"Hello, Skykit, Stormkit," she greeted Lightningstrike's kits.

Dawnmist tried to be happy, but the kits just reminded her of Spark.

"Dawnmist, you need to talk to someone," Lightningstrike's voice was sympathetic. "You're sad every day, I can see it."

"I'm not," Dawnmist argued feebly but it wasn't true.

"Go talk to someone," Lightningstrike encouraged.

"Thanks, but I can't." Dawnmist lay down unhappily.

Skykit scrambled onto her nose, squeaking, while Stormkit struggled. Lightningstrike purred as she lifted Skykit off. "Find a mate," she recommended. "You need your mind off the past."

Dawnmist's heart ached as she thought about her life. It was empty and the space seemed to swallow her up. First Demonclaw, then Foxclaw. Then Spark and finally, Salem.

She's right, her heart whispered, but her mind denied it. *You don't need to love! You're a strong cat!*

Love! Hate! Love! Hate!

"I can't take it!" Dawnmist cried out.

"Go take a break," Lightningstrike offered.

Dawnmist dipped her head and left the queen alone. A cat hurried towards her. It was Duskpelt.

"Dawnmist, you're telling me whats wrong right now!" she growled.

"I'm lonely. ThunderClan doesn't seem like...*ThunderClan* anymore." Dawnmist admitted.

It was a bit strange talking to her instead of Salem, but she appreciated it all the same.

"I think you need a break," Duskpelt said seriously.

"That's what Lightningstrike said!" Dawnmist hissed.

"No, an actual break. I think you need time away from the Clan." Duskpelt regarded her through piercing yellow eyes.

A break from the Clan?

"I guess I did consider leaving for a while, but I'd miss you all too much!" Dawnmist burst out.

"I see," Duskpelt said calmly. "I know what's wrong with you."

Tell me!

"You're heart sick." She said wisely.

Heart sick. Am I? Have I really been that grouchy?

"Goldenperch!" Duskpelt yowled across the camp. "Luckystar!"

"No!" Dawnmist protested but the damage was done.

Both leader and deputy came over questioningly.

"What is it?" Luckystar asked.

"Dawnmist needs to talk to you," Duskpelt hissed.

"I'm heart sick." Dawnmist confided in them.

"Oh, Dawnmist," Goldenperch seemed to understand immediately. "Why didn't you tell us?"

"I couldn't! You'd think badly of me!" Dawnmist spilled out every emotion. "I've been feeling like fox-dung for ages, I've thought about a cat from another Clan and I've loved, and still love, dead cats!"

"Dawnmist, you can tell us," Luckystar mewed.

"I have to work so hard," Dawnmist took a breath before looking at Duskpelt. "You make it seem like I must be perfect, you've never said that you're proud of me, and you've never understood or talked to me, and you ask why I don't talk to you!"

"Dawnmist, I'm sorry," Duskpelt ducked her head, but she wasn't finished.

"It's been so hard to stop everyone from seeing that I love Demonclaw since he joined DarkClan, when he was exiled I had to cover up to stop it from showing, I had to put my love aside for the good of the Clan and I hated it. I hated having to wait and be patient and wait and be more patient, I hated having to see my first mate join the dark side. I thought I found love again when I met Foxclaw, but then Demonclaw came *back* and then he-he..."

Dawnmist stopped, gasping for breath. "He killed Foxclaw."

"I had no idea..." Luckystar breathed.

"I had to watch; do you understand? I had to watch Foxclaw be brutally murdered! I still have nightmares about that night. I keep seeing Demonclaw's claws in mine, and I keep wondering if I'm like him since I loved him. I keep wondering if I'm good, and whether I should leave for the good of the Clan, since I *love* ThunderClan! It's my birth Clan, but it's not anymore. I mated with Foxclaw; you know? I mated with him, I loved him, and when he died, my terror and fury made me birth early. You don't remember, you wouldn't, but I birthed one kit who was born a runt and it died."

"You haven't had your first mate exiled and turned evil, you haven't had your second mate murdered, you haven't had your kit killed by

your first mate, I've had enough! This stress, this pressure is killing me! I can't handle it anymore, I can't handle anything anymore! I'm a coward, I know it, but it'll probably be better for you if I leave. And I am going to leave. This Clan is not right for me anymore and I don't want to be a burden. I can't hunt without seeing Demonclaw's eyes, I can't patrol without hearing Demonclaw's purrs and I can't sleep without seeing Foxclaw as he died."

"And that's why I'm telling you to be sorry, since I'm leaving. I've had too much grief in my life, and my heart can't take it, so from this moment on, I vow that I will never take another mate, I will never have kits and I will never let myself succumb to grief again!"

The words burst out of her mouth without any stopping, and she paused, catching her breath.

"Tell them that I've gone. Tell them that I left. And tell them why. Let them all know." Dawnmist held her head tall and strode out of the camp, her tail tucked between her legs.

Longer than chapter 7 but yeah still kinda short sorry

Dawnmist's Heart - Chapter 9

Dawnmist looked back once she was at the entrance of the camp and saw her family gathered where she had let out everything, she could see Frogfern and Sunrise and Duskpelt, but she knew she couldn't go back.

But she was free.

"What can I do?" she wondered out loud.

Breaking into a sprint, she left ThunderClan territory behind and travelled towards the mountains. Maybe she'd meet the Tribe that the elders talked about, maybe she'd meet some new cats.

It was a long, arduous and hard journey. Several times she had come close to death, by drowning, by rogues or by eagles.

But finally, she stood on top of the tallest mountain, bruised and with a broken foreleg, yet triumphant. For only a second.

Dawnmist collapsed on her side. "Ow..." she moaned.

Rustling in the bushes made her flinch. "Who's there?" she called out quietly.

"I will not hurt you," the voice soothed her.

It was late Greenleaf and the sun shined onto her back while the cat stepped out from the shadows. "I am Sun," he purred. "And you need our help."

"Who?" Dawnmist questioned weakly.

"The Dynasty of Truth," Sun stepped aside revealing a group of cats.

Their pelts were sleek and varied. Their eyes shone with wisdom and truth. Dawnmist let her head lay on the rock and all went black.

Dawnmist woke up to see a leafy den. *Where am I?*

Then she remembered the Dynasty of Truth. She sat up abruptly, wincing as her head thumped.

"Ahh, you are awake," Sun's voice made her feel drowsy. "Now, who are you?"

"I'm Dawnmist, and I come from the Clans." She responded.

"And why have you come? It seems like a long journey," Sun interrogated.

"It didn't feel like home," Dawnmist replied simply.

"I understand..." Sun mused. "You have answered truthfully. We will allow you to stay with us."

"Who said anything about staying...oh! Thank you, Sun," she let a purr escape.

I'll stay. The Dynasty of Truth seems like helpful and loyal cats.

Dawnmist soon got accustomed to the Dynasty's strange rules. It was very different to ThunderClan. In the Dynasty, you had to speak the truth, otherwise their StarClan, a cat named Truth, would find out and have your soul forever.

Dawnmist liked it here. She had become strong friends with Eclipse, a pretty black she-cat with wise yellow eyes.

One day, she was out with the hunters catching prey. A rabbit scurried by and Eclipse, who was her hunting partner, seemed unfazed.

Dawnmist cocked her head in surprise and chased after it, catching it quickly and killing it with a neat bite. Eclipse still hadn't turned her head from where she perched.

"Well?" Dawnmist demanded.

Eclipse kept silent before springing forward and chasing a deer.

Dawnmist's jaw dropped before she hurried after her friend. Eclipse cut the deer off and Dawnmist grabbed its flank. Blood trickled out and Eclipse took this to her advantage by leaping onto the deer's back. It whinnied in surprise and crumpled to the ground, kicking feebly.

Dawnmist saw her chance and bit its neck. It was dead.

"That was brilliant!" Dawnmist had never seen a cat hunt down a deer before.

Maybe the Dynasty really were more powerful and good than ThunderClan.

"Thanks," Eclipse agreed before narrowing her eyes. "You almost ruined it by chasing the rabbit. The deer almost saw you."

"How did you see the deer so fast?" Dawnmist asked in awe.

"Us Dynasty cats are accustomed to spotting brown pelts within the trees," Eclipse said with a shrug. "It's easy once you're trained for a bit."

Once you're trained for a bit. She made it sound like she actually wanted her to stay!

"Thanks," she stammered, still in disbelief.

Eclipse purred before tapping the ground lightly. A few moments later, she recognized Sun's ginger pelt through the green bracken. Behind Sun was Violet, Fawn and Mountain.

"How did you do *that* then?" Dawnmist flicked her tail at the cats coming towards them.

Violet puffed out her chest. "Guards are specially trained to be alert for when a hunter gives the signal."

Dawnmist tapped her paw on the ground carefully, looking up when she heard a small cough.

Mountain stood, purring slightly.

"What?" Dawnmist said defensively.

"That's not how it works," Eclipse purred to her. "This is how you do it."

She was about to show Dawnmist when Sun cut in. "Careful, Eclipse. She's not in the Dynasty yet."

Eclipse huffed before turning back to Dawnmist. "C'mon, let's go."

Dawnmist padded after Eclipse warily, the guards melting back into the bracken.

"Can you teach me how to hunt so easily?" Dawnmist asked, excited as a kit.

"Alright," Eclipse agreed.

"Thanks!" Dawnmist dropped into the hunting crouch, watching as Eclipse stalked forward on light paws.

"Out here in a mixed environment, you need to know when to step lightly. For example, on sand, you want to step as light as you can, so you don't sink. But if you're on leaves, stepping heavily will actually make the prey less wary." Eclipse demonstrated the heavy paw steps by crunching in the leaves.

"How? In ThunderClan, they always taught us to step lightly, so they don't feel cats coming." Dawnmist questioned eagerly.

"We used that in the past, but we learnt that the deer, our main target for prey, can't hear heavy paw steps," Eclipse explained.

"Amazing," she breathed back.

"It's pretty cool," Eclipse puffed out her chest, a deep purr sounding from her chest.

They went back to camp, the deer already deposited in the fresh-kill hollow. An impressive pile of prey was already there, Eclipse and Dawnmist's deer, about 5 rabbits, a couple voles and a bushy squirrel.

"Grab something from the pile for me," Eclipse said lazily to Dawnmist and she obliged with a dip of her head.

Dawnmist padded to the pile, and after a fight in her head about what to take, she took the bushy squirrel for Eclipse and a vole for herself.

"A feast!" Sun called from his spot near the large den that all cats slept in, apart from the queens and kits, regardless of rank. Dawnmist appreciated this part of the Dynasty; equality.

The deputy, Sand, dragged the deer out from the hollow and lay it in the middle of camp. The Dynasty swarmed out of their resting places or dens, and Dawnmist and Eclipse, quickly finishing off the last few bites of their prey, followed swiftly.

"Who hunted it?" Sand called to Sun.

"Eclipse and Dawnmist," Sun said proudly.

Eclipse moved forward, Dawnmist a few paw steps behind her, as they took the first bite. Warm meat and blood trickled into her mouth, her taste buds on fire.

"This is amazing stuff," Dawnmist mumbled over a mouth of deer.

"'Mazing," Eclipse agreed. "Absolutely 'mazing."

She hadn't noticed, but the rest of the Dynasty had trickled after them, munching on the delicious deer meat. Usually, Dawnmist didn't overindulge herself, but today, considering there was a plethora of food to go around, she munched and chewed along the other cats. Dawnmist found Sun at her side, the ginger tom's tail flicking in satisfaction as he bit off a succulent piece of meat.

"You deserve to be here," Sun said after the deer was half eaten.

His yellow eyes gazed over her with pride. "You've hunted and taught us new moves. You belong here."

Dawnmist's Heart - Chapter 10

Dawnmist sat in Sun's den. Sun and Sand stood at the entrance, making sure no one came in while the she-cat talked with Eclipse.

"So, what's all this about?" Eclipse said briskly.

"I'm leaving," Dawnmist said quietly. "The Dynasty isn't for me. I miss ThunderClan, my parents and my littermates. I miss my old friends, although I'll miss you."

"Oh...Dawnmist," Eclipse ducked her head against Dawnmist's. "I will miss you forever too. I understand when you say you want to go back. I'd feel the same if I left the Dynasty for a moon."

A moon, Dawnmist reflected. It had been one full moon since she had arrived at the Dynasty's camp, close to dead. A moon had passed since she had felt so unhappy, and now?

Now she felt happy.

"I hope you're happy," Eclipse echoed her thoughts. "Wherever you go."

"You too," Dawnmist purred, nuzzling her best friend.

She left Eclipse in the den, a sad feeling crossing her body, her heart. She hadn't felt this sad since...Demonclaw and Foxclaw.

I haven't thought about them in a whole moon. I've been so happy.

"And I still am," she said out loud. "I still am."

Her heart beat with content and her breath was clear and even. Her ears pricked with anxiety and excitement and her pelt was sleek under the warm sun of Greenleaf.

This is the life.

Demonclaw and Foxclaw still carried a special spot in her heart, but she decided she wasn't going to spend all eternity worrying over them. She'd move on.

"You're leaving," Sun remarked. It wasn't a question, more of a statement.

"I am," Dawnmist agreed hesitantly. "Thank you for letting me stay."

"It was my pleasure. I'll tell the Dynasty after you leave." Sun dipped his head, and Dawnmist dipped hers in return.

Dawnmist held her head high as she left through the entrance of the camp, leaving her home for a moon, leaving friends and comrades, leaving a kind leader and a warm deputy, some loving mothers and some joyful kits, and leaving Eclipse. Her best friend, her only friend.

"Goodbye," she whispered before running off through the woods, leaving the Dynasty's territory.

One moon later...

Dawnmist paused, her nostrils pulsing as she smelt a scent she hadn't scented in two moons. ThunderClan.

"Time to go home," she murmured to herself.

Bounding through the woods she had grown up in, she purred and thought of memories, good and bad. The trail that Demonclaw had taken her to when she was ill. The secret fox-den she had used to sneak away from camp. The clearing where Demonclaw had died. And finally, the camp.

Scents rushed towards her, all at once, dizzying her. She smelt Duskpelt and Frogfern and Sunrise and Luckystar and Goldenperch and everyone. She burst into the camp, happy to be home at last.

Duskpelt was the first to notice her, her ears twitching and her nose quivering. Then, she had turned around and ran towards her. Frogfern and Sunrise had followed immediately.

As Dawnmist struggled to leave her mother's embrace to actually see her littermates, she thought about her life. *I've suffered, but I will bounce back. I've loved, but I will treasure them in my mind forever. I've witnessed death, but I will continue to live my life to its fullest.*

I will live and love, not for a mate, but for my family.

Short- yeaa but I rather like this ending.

Dawnmist's Heart - Epilogue

Dawnmist struggled to get up, the leaf-bare winds strong as ever. Her muzzle, gray with age, stretched towards water, any water. Larkleaf hurried towards her, afraid for her.

Don't be, she wanted to say. *I'm going to die anyway.*

Dawnmist lowered her head again, letting Larkleaf's form disappear from her mind, and the darkness engulfed her.

"Dawnmist!"

"Dawnmist!"

"Dawnmist!"

Go away and let me sleep!

"Dawnmist, wake up!"

You furball-...

Could it be?

Dawnmist opened her heavy eyes to see a very familiar black pelt with bright blue eyes. It couldn't be. He couldn't have made it to StarClan.

Beside him...an orange pelt. Foxclaw!

"Foxclaw...Demonclaw?" Dawnmist mewed, shocked. "Oh, StarClan. I'm dead, aren't I?"

"You're beautiful," Foxclaw corrected, leaning in to nuzzle her.

"Very," Demonclaw glared at Foxclaw but Dawnmist purred when she saw it was a playful glare.

What had happened in StarClan? And, if it was StarClan, where were the stars in her fur?

Dawnmist looked around the star flecked meadow. It was peaceful, unlike her last minutes. The pain was gone.

"I really am in StarClan." Dawnmist breathed.

Demonclaw and Foxclaw both leaned forward and beckoned. Dawnmist followed them and she felt a strange tingling in her. Looking down, she saw stars in her fur.

"You crossed the border," Demonclaw said simply, his blue eyes full of happiness and joy.

"Now you're officially in StarClan. Let me show you around," Foxclaw bounced around, excited as a kit, handsome as ever.

"This is the pool where we can look at the Clans," Demonclaw stopped their tour at a small pool.

Dawnmist touched her paw to the surface and it rippled.

Frogfern...Frogfern...Frogfern... she called in her mind.

The water stilled and she saw Frogfern's body in the water. He was in the nursery, with Echoflight, his mate. Her heart ached as she saw her brother taking care of Echoflight, who was due to have her second litter soon. This couldn't be present. The Clans were...in danger. And Echoflight would have a special role to play. It must be the future.

"It's amazing," Dawnmist turned her head away from the pool, facing Demonclaw and Foxclaw.

And it's only just started.

= = = = = = = = = **DIVIDER** = = = =

End of Dawnmist's Heart

Start of Spark's Grief

(This is not a chapter.)

Spark's Grief - Prologue

The kit looked around, tumbling over its clumsy paws. Loud yowls sounded outside the hollow where it and its brother had been sleeping. It looked at its light-yellow body and frowned. Green eyes met green eyes as it stared at its brother.

"What's happening?" the kit asked its brother.

"I don't know." He replied quietly.

The kit turned around and faced the entrance of the hollow and stared at it, unmoving, with pale, determined green eyes.

A loud yowl split the air. The kit jumped, its brother coming out to nuzzle it. All of a sudden, a sickly smell wafted into the den. The kit sniffed the air cautiously, instinctively reaching for its brother.

A body thumped into the den. It was the kit's father. A handsome brown tabby he was.

Was.

The kit gasped as it realized its father wasn't moving. It moved towards the body, trembling. Its brother blocked its path defensively.

Red liquid pooled from the kit's father's body. A droplet of it reached its paws and it touched it with its tiny pink tongue, curious. Its brother's fur bristled as he watched it like a protective brother would.

The kit recoiled, licking its fur nervously. It had tasted sweet and salty at the same time.

Its brother pushed it back and stood at the entrance, jagged, white points bared from its mouth.

Another yowl split the air.

The kit crept towards its brother, longing for the warmth of its fur. Its father still hadn't moved.

Paw steps thumped at the entrance of the hollow.

The kit poked its head out, not realizing the danger that threatened its family. Not realizing the rogues that had invaded its camp. A silver claw flashed at it, cutting its cheek, and it yelped. It stung and it struggled to lick it.

The kit crawled back into the hollow, not long before a soothing scent came in, covered in the red liquid.

Mother.

Both kits struggled towards their mother, crying out with trembling mews.

Mother licked it, soothing it, before turning to its brother.

"You, my dear daughter, will be known as Spark Who Never Burns Out, for the spark that will never burn out in you." Mother said in a trembling tone. "And you, my son, shall be known as Fire That Flickers and Burns, for the hardness that will keep you alive. Spark and Fire for short."

Mother's voice trembled and Spark felt danger pressing in on them. She let out a mew of warning and crept into a hole at the back of the den. She watched her mother turn towards her before silver claws flashed at Mother. The large cat crashed to the ground. The claws turned on her brother...no, Fire.

Spark watched, a silent burning her eyes, a silent cry in her throat, as Firefell to the ground.

"NOOOO!"

Spark had watched her father die.

Spark had watched her mother die.

Spark had watched Fire die.

Spark wanted to die herself.

She curled into a ball, miserable, and stayed there, even as a chunk of rock and vine fell on her, breaking her fragile body.

Spark's Grief - Chapter 1

Spark looked around, all her senses on highest alert, as she prowled the streets of Twolegplace. It had been seven moons since her birth and her family's death.

She gritted her teeth as the rat she had been chasing eluded her. Again. It ducked under a low fence and she thrust her head through, spitting, as it raced free.

Spark growled, taking her head out. She licked a cut on her leg. It was throbbing, but not the worst pain she'd felt before. The worst pain was Fire dying.

She shivered as she thought of that moment. It had been horrible, even though she had been very young.

Spark's ears twitched and she spun around just to see something move in the shadowy depths of the forest. She stared into the dark trees that blotted out the sun. Spark was sure something had moved.

Interested, she started forward to move into the trees when two cats appeared from behind the trunks, where they had been waiting.

"Go away, kittypet!" the brown she-cat growled, thrusting her muzzle into Spark's face.

"We don't usually attack kittypets," the black she-cat said calmly. "But if you try to come in further, we will chase you out."

Spark looked the forest cats into the eye calmly. Growing up on the streets of Twolegplace, she had heard of the vicious forest cats that hunted for real prey and defended their borders very carefully.

"One," Spark said logically. "I'm not a kittypet. Two, I'm not even in your territory. I was just moving towards it. Who knows what I was doing?"

The brown cat looked stumped. "Sorry," she muttered.

The black she-cat flicked her tail and both cats disappeared into the trees.

The forest seemed like a mysterious and strong place. Spark wished dearly that she could join them but she, a street cat, could not match the powerful forest cats.

A bush behind her rustled and she looked around to see a thickset, brown tom with white patches and amber eyes.

"Who're you?" Spark demanded, fluffing out her fur.

"I'm Claw," the tom drawled proudly. "And I want to extend you an invitation. I haven't met many she-cats who can scare away the forest cats."

Spark let her guard down slightly and glared at him. "I don't team up with anyone!" she hissed.

"I bring a peace offering," Claw smirked, stepping to the side, revealing a squirrel.

Spark's belly grumbled and she glanced at the food. It smelled delicious. "Fine, just this once," she huffed.

Claw panted happily and trotted to her side, bringing the squirrel with him. Spark bit into the warm body. It was freshly killed. Within moments, Spark had devoured the squirrel. It had been one of the best prey creatures she had tasted, following a large rabbit that a patrol of forest cats hadn't managed to catch.

Claw purred, suddenly nuzzling up to her side. Spark stiffened, unused to being cared for. It felt good.

Spark relaxed, letting the brown tom lick and groom her fur. It was good to have a friend.

12 moons later...

Spark leaned into a brick wall, sighing. She hadn't seen Claw in

over three moons. They had become firm friends, yet in the last couple moons they hadn't met.

Spark growled, unhappy with herself. She didn't let herself realize it, but she missed Claw. He had become a partner, a huntmate, a friend. The stupid cat. He had betrayed her. He was a traitor.

She kicked the wall angrily, glaring up at the human house. Stupid humans. They had all the ever needed without sparing anything for the street cats. The forest, like usual, caught her eye. It was still too formidable to approach, yet interesting. Stupid forest cats. They didn't spare anything either.

"Whatcha doing?"

Spark couldn't believe what she was hearing. Slowly, she turned around.

"You stupid tom!" she cried, throwing herself into him. "I thought you were captured or killed!"

Indeed, Claw had snuck up on her.

"Three moons!" she raged at him. "Three moons and you just return like that? I should attack you right on the spot!"

She was still in denial that she loved Claw. It was too early.

"I have an offer for you..." Claw said in a monotone voice.

"You're not Claw," Spark spat at him. "My Claw doesn't do that!"

Too late, she realized she'd said *my*. Embarrassed, she turned her head away.

"A tom wants you to join his Clan." Claw told her in the same voice.

"Clan?" Spark tilted her head.

Wasn't that what the forest cats called themselves? Perhaps Claw had remembered after all. Perhaps he had remembered her interest in them.

She agreed a little hesitantly. Spark followed Claw to a clearing where she was introduced to her leader and two other cats, Nettle and Razor.

After some arguing, Spark slept with Nettle for the night. Sleepily, she wondered what Clan life was about.

I'm truly going to know now. I'll never have to suffer again, and I'll never fear again.

Spark woke the next morning at Demonclaw's yowl. She rolled out of her nest, yawning. It was barely dawn, she realized.

Spark padded outside to see Demonclaw already perched on a high rock with Nettle, Razor and Claw sitting before him.

"You're late," Demonclaw hissed at her.

Spark shrugged, choosing a warm spot in the sun. She twitched her ears and flicked her tail, signalling she was ready. Demonclaw growled lowly before starting.

"Our most important goal for the next few sunrises is to recruit members. Anyone you know that wants to join will be fine, as long as they swear loyalty to me. I will also be introducing Trusted Warriors. As you know, this Clan is called RevengeClan. You must become a Trusted Warrior to be able to have revenge." Demonclaw drawled, pacing on the rock.

Spark perked up. Revenge did sound sweet...

Over the next few days, Spark strived her hardest to earn the rank of Trusted Warrior. She brought back the most prey when she went hunting, tore the most kittypet pelts when she was on guard duty and brought back the most members when she was tasked with recruitment. She had found Ruthless, a black she-cat, Bloodmoon, an orange-red tabby tom and Water That Trickles Off Cliff.

While Ruthless and Bloodmoon both opted as normal warriors, Water had chosen to become their first medicine cat. She had a knowledge of herbs that was unheard of and Spark was greatly impressed.

"Let all cats gather here!" Demonclaw's yowl made her fur bristle and spark in excitement.

Spark followed Dark, one of Claw's recruits, to the perch where Demonclaw sat, his bright eyes surveying the cats below him. Nettle had recruited Leaf In The Wind before she had died from a fox's claws. Dark had killed the fox.

"We have enough cats," he rumbled softly, pride in his voice. "And now, I will appoint some Trusted Warriors."

Will it be me?

Spark hoped that he would pick her. The black tom was strong, even though he was missing one of his eyes. She slid a sideways glance at Dark. Spark admired Dark for his intelligence and cunning. He had cornered a fox and tore it into pieces before she could send for help.

Secretly, she fancied him, and hoped he fancied her.

He doesn't.

Spark told herself firmly. I've seen the way he looks at her. He won't like me.

"Our first Trusted Warrior is Claw!" Demonclaw roared.

Of course. Spark thought bitterly. *Demonclaw's favourite.*

"Our second Trusted Warrior is Ruthless!" her leader continued.

Soon, Bloodmoon and Razor had also been gifted the role of Trusted Warrior.

What about me? I helped bring Bloodmoon and *Ruthless into the Clan. I also brought our medicine cat, who saved lives!*

"There are only going to be five today, and our last Trusted Warrior is Spark!"

Spark shook her head, in denial. *What?*

Dark looked at her for the first time since he came, respect in his eyes.

Maybe I can have a future with him.

Then he looked away towards her.

Spark's fur fluffed out angrily and she held her breath until she could get herself under control.

For Dark's love for Leaf was clear in his eyes.

Spark's Grief - Chapter 2

Spark picked at her rabbit sadly. Dark had eyes for no one but Leaf. It was a pity.

Leaf had been her best friend too.

She had failed herself, again.

Spark padded through the forest, following Demonclaw, her thoughts about Dark forgotten as she sought her revenge. It had been four moons since her appointment of Trusted Warrior, and she had finally found her perfect revenge. On the cat who had killed her family.

The patrol stalked through the woods, Spark nodding appreciatively at them. It was a moderate sized patrol, made for ambush. Leaf had come, as well as Ruthless, Nightfire, Hawk and Pounce. There were many cats in the Clan now, making it easier to stay protected.

Demonclaw flicked his tail and Nightfire, Hawk and Pounce separated from them. They circled around the cat's den.

Demonclaw let out a yowl and all seven cats charged into the den, waking up the sleeping tom.

Spark got her first proper look at him.

He had dark brown fur and amber eyes. His white paws were stained red, from blood, Spark assumed. His ears were twitchy, and his nose picked up their scent as he sprang to his paws, alerted immediately.

"Who're you?" he demanded. "And what are you doing here?"

Spark noticed he hid his paws behind his back.

Most likely hiding another murder.

"We're here to kill you," Demonclaw growled at him.

Immediately, a bolt of respect flashed through Spark. Demonclaw was being true to his word of revenge. How noble.

Spark mewed her agreement and arched her back, her fur fluffed out as she faced her enemy.

"I remember you..." the tom glared at Spark.

"And I do as well," Spark snarled back.

Suddenly, she crumpled to the ground, her head pounding in pain. A memory buried deeply came to the surface of her mind.

"Go away!" Spark had cried, facing the murderer of her family.

"I shall not," he had replied smoothly. "Why don't you go and fight me? I'll win, though."

"Fine!" Spark had retorted.

It had been a brash move.

The tom had lunged at her, ripping through her fur.

Spark had let out weak mews of protest as blood oozed from her fur, making it clump up.

"Alright, little kit?" he had leered over her meanly.

"Stop, stop!" she had yowled.

He had not stopped.

Spark had curled into a ball, defenceless against his sharp claws that rained upon her.

The tom had sliced a claw through her ear, and she had screamed in pain, the agony too much for such a young cat. It had only been a moon since her family's death.

"Who are you?" Spark's last words had been desperate.

"I am your worst nightmare," the tom had breathed into her ear. "I am Dusk..."

Spark struggled to breathe as her worst nightmare flashed over and over in her mind.

"Spark, are you okay?" Demonclaw was next to her, supporting her, while Dusk sneered at them.

"Alright, little kit?" Dusk sneered.

Rage. More than she had ever felt.

Spark yowled with pure fury and flew at Dusk, her claws lashing out. She felt satisfaction when her claws hit fur and blood flowed beneath her paws.

The blood soaked her fur, turning her light-yellow fur darken with red stains. She could feel herself tiring.

But her rage kept her going.

Spark bit scratched and clawed Dusk and ignored the throbbing in her legs and paws. Spark's claws hurt but she kept going.

She was only dimly aware of the other six cats helping her but she vowed with passion that she would be the one to kill Dusk. The tom was outnumbered and rasping for breath as Demonclaw sat on him.

"I surrender!" Dusk gasped.

"I shall kill you!" Spark's eyes gleamed in the darkness of the cave.

Dusk backed away, real fear in his eyes. Spark relished the feeling of him cowering away from her.

He deserved it. Spark justified herself in her mind. No, she would not feel guilt.

Her silver, sharpened claws fell into his neck. Dusk let out a strangled wail before falling silent and still.

Spark gazed over his limp limbs and wide eyes. His blood still gushed over her paws.

"I did it," she muttered.

Spark barely remembered the walk back to the camp. She barely remembered Leaf's mew of congratulations after they got back. She didn't care as much as usual when Dark only nodded to her before turning away.

She had succeeded.

"Leaf! You made it!" Spark cheered her friend as she was made a Trusted Warrior.

"Thanks!" Leaf purred, her eyes glowing with joy.

"How could you?" Demonclaw's voice was raised in a growl.

Spark watched with horror as Demonclaw killed Fang viciously before kicking the body away contemptuously.

"That's what will happen if you attack me," he said in a low, menacing voice. "Now, let's continue, shall we?"

Leaf was officially made a Trusted Warrior and Spark watched with pride. They hunted down Leaf's mother for her revenge and Spark emerged from the battle, wounded yet triumphant.

Spark went on a hunting patrol with Claw, Crowspirit and Pounce. They found a rats' nest and Spark raided it eagerly.

When they came back, Leaf went to fetch Demonclaw and he emerged from his den, his jaw dropped open. "Claw! Spark! Crowspirit? Pounce? How?"

Claw let go of the five rat tails that he held in his teeth. "We found a rat nest out on a hunting patrol. The rats there were so easy to kill! None fought back!"

"Come, add your fresh kill to the pile," Demonclaw invited.

Claw dropped five rats onto the pile, Crowspirit had managed to kill four, Pounce had caught six and Spark caught an impressive eight rats. She dropped them on the pile with pride.

"Spark, lead another patrol back to the rats' nest, I want to see if we can kill all those rats," Demonclaw ordered.

I will, Demonclaw!

"Yes, Demonclaw." Spark met his gaze. Lightning flashed between the two cats and Demonclaw hastily dropped his gaze.

What was that? Do I like Demonclaw *too?*

"Razor, Flash, Ruthless, Nightfire, Snake, Leaf, you can come with me," Spark mewed, trying to clear the fog.

"I'll go as well," Dark offered, shooting a glance at Leaf.

Spark growled, low in her throat. Dark was continuing to move onto Leaf.

"No, Dark," Spark had just opened her mouth when Demonclaw had answered sharply. "Seven will be enough."

Dark dropped his gaze sadly.

Spark led the way through the forest, her paws leaving prints on the snow. She shivered as a snowflake fell onto her nose.

Leaf danced around, excited as a pup. Ruthless was serene as always and sat down quietly. Flash and Razor joined Leaf and the three of them gambolled around. Ruthless, Nightfire and Snake started sniffing out prey among the snow and Spark gazed around the forest happily.

Spark's Grief - Chapter 3

Spark sidled up to Dark, a rabbit clutched in her jaws. "Would you like to share?"

It had been two sunrises since Leaf's death. It was rumoured that Demonclaw had killed her.

Dark ducked his head away.

Spark stiffened.

Fine!

But she still found herself trying to impress him.

"Dark, shall we go on a patrol together?" Spark nudged him playfully.

Dark opened his mouth, his eyes darkening. "No!" he hissed before storming off.

"Do you want to eat?" Spark asked Dark hopefully.

"Go away!" Dark snapped back.

Spark sighed, padding back towards the Trusted Warrior's den. She gazed forlornly at Dark. The tom had refused to go on any hunts or patrols since Leaf's death. She lay in her nest, unable to sleep. Leaf's death still burned fresh in her mind. Her broken body, covered in fox-scent.

Too much fox-scent.

Spark pricked up, suddenly suspicious. Demonclaw had gone with a walk with Leaf...then he had come back with prey. But not with Leaf.

And Leaf had been found dead.

Demonclaw's eyes burned with jealousy.

Demonclaw had loved Leaf too, Spark realized.

A dark figure moved around camp. *Demonclaw*. She watched through semi-closed eyes as Demonclaw paced the clearing before talking to Dark. Then, the two toms sat under the moon.

Do something, Demonclaw! Then I can suspect you!

Spark had almost fallen asleep when Dark left Demonclaw alone. She roused herself quickly and stealthily followed.

Spark followed Demonclaw to the place where Leaf was buried.

Oh no.

"Leaf, if you can hear me, I'm sorry for killing you." He mewed quietly so that no one but himself could hear. "I was too mad. And I hope wherever you are, StarClan or the Place of No Stars, you are happy and will find your true soulmate."

Spark let out a small gasp and ran at full speed back to her nest. In her nest, she panted with exhaustion and panic.

So, Demonclaw killed Leaf. He killed Leaf In The Wind, my best friend.

The next morning, Spark watched Demonclaw carefully from the safety of the den. He sprang up to the ledge and Spark found herself admiring his strength. He might be an evil fox-heart, but he certainly was strong.

"RevengeClan, wake up!" he yowled loudly. Claw was the first one to stir, bounding towards him eagerly. Spark came next, followed by a disgruntled Ruthless. Soon, all the cats were awake.

"Tigerstar, my father, came to me in a dream. He has offered me a proposition. We are to join his Clan, DarkClan, and both Tigerstar and I will finally earn our revenge. How does it sound?" Demonclaw purred.

"I'll join. This Tigerstar sounds powerful, and then it'll be easier for

the rest of us to get our revenge!" Flash called.

"I'll join too!" Spark caterwauled loudly.

What did I do that for? He killed Leaf!

"Me too!" another cat called.

Soon, the whole Clan had agreed.

"Good." Demonclaw announced. "Tonight, I will ask Tigerstar how to get to the Place of No Stars. Then, tomorrow, we will rise!"

The next day, she watched with sadness as they left Leaf's body, watched with horror as Fang was killed by Salem. She watched with fear as she was pulled under a pool of water and into a dark forest.

"Congratulations, son. You've followed my paw prints." A dark brown tabby purred. "When Goldenperch stole you away, I was worried I wouldn't have an heir. But you're here now, so I guess I was wrong!"

"Thank you, Tigerstar. RevengeClan, meet Tigerstar. Tigerstar, meet my Clan." Demonclaw responded.

Spark dipped her head to Tigerstar before purring at Demonclaw.

What's wrong with me?

Tigerstar let out a loud purr. "I finally have an heir." He repeated.

Another tabby with glittering blue eyes came out of the shadows. "What about me?" he objected.

"A *living* heir." Tigerstar murmured. "Hawkfrost! From this moment on, you are no longer deputy!"

She watched with interest as Demonclaw puffed out his chest. Hawkfrost's protests were unheard.

"Dark Forest ancestors, I ask you to look down on Demonclaw. He is to be the new deputy!" Tigerstar yowled.

Without thinking, Spark lay her tail on Demonclaw's flank.

What did I just do? What's wrong with me? I have a suspicion...

Tigerstar gave Demonclaw a disapproving glare.

"Congratulations, Demonclaw! Deputy!" Spark purred, but even to her, she could tell that she was developing feelings.

Demonclaw talked to Tigerstar for a bit longer before turning to Spark with glowing eyes.

How did I never notice how handsome those blue eyes are?

"Thanks."

One moon later...

Spark curled her tail around her body, dragging it through the dead leaves. The moment she touched the leaves, they crumbled to dust.

I hate it here. Why don't I leave? She questioned herself.

Because I want him.

With a sinking feeling, she realized why she was staying.

"Spark! There you are!"

It's him.

Spark shoved an expression of pure joy onto her face and spun around to meet Demonclaw. "Hi!" she said breathlessly, frantically searching her fur for any stray tufts.

"Hey, do you want to go hunting?" Demonclaw's eyes were pools of blue bliss. Spark gazed into them, mesmerized.

"Sure..." Spark said, still in a trance.

"Let's go!" Demonclaw barked at her, leaping into a run.

Spark followed him, her muscles aching with protest as they raced

past the dead trees and eerie fog.

I have to stop feeling like this.

"Stop it!" Spark thought to herself angrily. "You'll just get hurt!"

But I want to love...a small voice in her head protested.

"Love someone else then!" Spark blurted without thinking.

Aha.

"Are you okay, Spark?" Spark stiffened when she felt Demonclaw's tail touch her flank.

"Yeah..." she answered out loud.

"I didn't quite catch what you said before, do you mind repeating it?" the tom purred at her, mischief in his bright blue eyes.

"Oh, I just said I smelt a rabbit," Spark lied, jabbing with her tail at a random bush.

"That's strange. I don't smell anything." Demonclaw trotted to the bush to take a closer sniff.

Oops.

Hmm...what are your other options? Dark, Demonclaw or...Claw! The little voice sneered at her.

NO! Spark shouted at it. *Dark probably hates everyone!*

What about Demonclaw? It asked, genuinely curious.

He's not safe. I suspect he killed Leaf. But even to her, it sounded weak.

Pfft. Claw then!

You're not giving up, are you? Spark growled, unable to keep focus with hunting.

"Sorry, Demonclaw, I have a bit of a pounding in my head. I can't concentrate." Spark said to him lovingly.

Why lovingly? Why did I do that?

"That's alright, love," Demonclaw flirted casually.

Stop, Spark!

The little voice started jeering at her. ***You're in looove, you're in looove!*** It chanted.

Spark shivered and abandoned Demonclaw, running away from those endless blue eyes, from his worried face, and his handsome black fur.

Spark's Grief - Chapter 4

Go away. Spark commanded the voice in her head as she lay in her den, curled up in a ball.

You're in looove, you're in looove! The voice replied.

Spark shoved her head underneath some moss, but she knew it wouldn't help. The voice had been troubling her the past few days, forcing her to admit that she loved Demonclaw. The voice, which she had started to refer to as the Spirit of Grief. She clenched her jaw when she remembered Claw telling her about his Spirits.

"What are the Spirits?" Spark asked curiously.

Before sleeping, Claw would turn a circle and give thanks to his spirits.

"They are cats that control the world. That's what I was taught to believe in. For example, the Spirit of Joy is a warm yellow she-cat with yellow eyes that brings you happiness. I thank her before sleeping for the happiness she has given me each day." Claw explained.

"What about the others? Tell me!" Spark begged.

"Well," Claw fumbled for the words. "The Spirit of Grief is a gray she-cat with haunted dark blue eyes. My father said that if you listen carefully enough, you can hear her saying bad things about you."

Spark winced as she recalled the Spirit of Grief.

So, I have a gray she-cat with haunted dark blue eyes living in my chest. How fun. Spark squirmed uncomfortably.

That's right. Grief replied. ***You have me and me only. I'm the only one you can trust. All the other cats in your world, they've betrayed you. I have never lied to you, Spark.***

"Spark, are you awake?"

Spark's ears flicked up upon hearing Demonclaw's voice.

"Yeah," Spark said hesitantly, a growl in her throat.

Grief won't be right! She thought desperately. *She* can't *be right.*

"Demonclaw," Spark purred. "Did you find Dawnpaw?"

Earlier that day, Tigerstar had sent Demonclaw to go find his previous mate. She scowled and jealousy crossed her face, her eyes darkening as she wished to sink her claws into the petty she-cat that had almost stolen her mate-

No! Grief, why are you doing this? You've made me love Demonclaw!

You've admitted it! Grief cackled back. ***Now, let's get you to break up.***

"Don't worry, Spark. Dawnpaw isn't a threat to you anymore. She forgot about me, rejected me. She was mating with Foxclaw. I killed him."

Spark took a step back. "You killed him."

"Spark! What I meant to say is, I care about you more than any other cat in this world. I love you, and I want you to be my mate. Spark, will you be my mate?" Demonclaw looked at her with those hopelessly blue eyes and she felt compelled to say yes.

"Demonclaw. I've been feeling this way about you for some time now, and yes, I will be your mate!" Spark replied.

Break uupp! Break uupp! Grief chanted evilly.

Demonclaw's ears twitched. "Come out!" he snarled.

A black tom with yellow eyes came out hesitantly. "What did you do to Leaf?" he growled.

"Dark. I should've known. I killed Leaf." Demonclaw puffed out his chest.

You- what?

"Why? For what? I loved her! She was expecting my *kits*!" Dark unsheathed his claws.

Oh, Leaf.

Everyone around you is dying! Grief taunted happily. ***You're a curse! First your precious mummy and daddy, then your brother, then Leaf-***

SHUT UP! Spark yowled inside her head.

Then Leaf, Grief continued. ***Who's going to be next? Will it be Dark or Claw or ooh! Will it be Demonclaw?***

Spark left her thoughts and glared at Dark. "Dark, leave."

Demonclaw looked from Dark to Spark. After Dark left, he faced Spark. "Did Dark love *you*?"

"He did," Spark lied. "But the only cat I want to mate with is you."

Good job, making him jealous. Who knows? He might even leave you now! Grief snarled meanly.

Spark sighed as Demonclaw left her to talk to Tigerstar. A few minutes later, he strode back, lashing his tail.

"You okay?" Spark asked softly.

Demonclaw lashed his tail. "Tigerstar needs to be overthrown. He keeps ordering me like I'm his slave!"

"Demonclaw, he's your leader," Spark mewed, amused. "He's supposed to boss you around."

Just like Grief can't boss me around.

I can too! I know your secrets and fears! Grief purred back in response.

"I don't care!" Demonclaw snapped. "I'm the leader, not him!"

"Yes, you're a completely natural leader," Spark teased.

"Not funny." He snarled.

This isn't the Demonclaw I know. He wouldn't snarl at me. Spark thought.

Oh yes, he would. Grief said, breaking her confidence. ***Why don't you ask about Leaf?***

"Can I ask you a question?" she stopped purring.

"Sure," Demonclaw meowed back.

"Why did you kill Leaf?" Spark shuffled her paws nervously. It would be painful if Grief was right.

"Leaf?" Demonclaw said dismissively. "She was useless. She rejected me, although it's an honor to mate with me, don't you think?"

"No." Spark said quietly.

She covered her mouth, shocked with her bravery.

I meant she wasn't useless!

I knew it! You're going to stop loving him!

"You don't?" Demonclaw asked, hurt in his eyes.

"No, I really don't, Demonclaw, you shouldn't have killed her." Spark turned away, hiding her face.

Here's what I want you to say, little ickle kitten, Grief mewed. ***You think you're cool, Demonclaw...***

"You think you're cool, Demonclaw," Spark's mouth started moving of its own accord.

Grief! She wailed. *Stop this!*

Now say this: But honestly, you're just cruel and sometimes a bully. I love you, I really do, but I don't want my kits to grow up

under the influence of a cruel father. Spark could clearly see Grief reveling in joy.

Hold on, Grief! When have I been expecting kits? And whose kits? Claw's or Dark's or Demonclaw's? Spark demanded.

Not telling!

"But honestly, you're just cruel and sometimes a bully. I love you, I really do, but I don't want my kits to grow up under the influence of a cruel father. Now I can understand why your mother left Tigerstar. Like father, like son." The words flowed out of her mouth and she gaped as Grief controlled her. "I *regret* mating with you. I feel *bad* for the little kits in my belly, for they'll have to grow up without a father."

Demonclaw didn't reply.

No! I didn't mean it! Please, Demonclaw! Spark thought wildly. *Grief, fix this!*

It was too late. The tom had left her. Just like everyone else.

Except for me... Grief said slyly. ***I haven't left you and I never will.***

Spark's Grief - Chapter 5

Spark charged with the other DarkClan and RevengeClan cats as they attacked a ThunderClan patrol. Spark immediately headed for Dawnpaw.

Dawnpawlet a yowl and clawed her shoulder. Spark dodged nimbly, screaming in excitement inside her head.

You're useless. She isn't even hurt. How are you supposed to win over Demonclaw with Dawnpaw in the way? Grief sneered.

Spark's eyes dimmed and she forgot to duck as Dawnpawslashed her ears.

"Get off!" Spark turned around hearing Claw's yowl.

The tom had a few ThunderClan cats on him like ticks and she scrambled towards him.

You're too lateee! Grief sang.

"What do you mean, you cursed being?" Spark hissed.

Indeed, she was too late.

The brown tom flailed around, a few deep bites on his flank, and fell to the ground, his white patches bloodstained.

"No!" Spark yowled.

Everyone's leaving you, Spark. Grief jeered. ***I'm the only one who loves you for what you are. A lonely, depressed, emotional cat.***

"Stop saying that!" she cried, her voice drowned out with the sounds of battle.

She paid no attention to the dozens of cats running around, bodies dropping to the ground. All she could hear was Grief's cackle and all

she could see was Claw's lifeless eyes.

Spark was immediately at Claw's side, staring down at the cat that had made her purr, that had made her happy, that had allowed her to have her revenge.

Claw was gone.

He's gone, Spark told herself. *You can't do anything about it.*

Why don't you hunt down the cat that killed him? Grief suggested.

Overwhelmed with sadness and anger, Spark agreed with Grief for once.

"Who killed him?" Spark yowled over the sounds of fighting. "Who killed Claw?"

No one even bothered to look at her, even Demonclaw. Spark's fur bristled and Grief soothed her.

It's alright, Spark. They're all gone, but I'm still here. We can make a trade...

Spark sighed. She was going to regret this, but she asked Grief about the trade.

I can help you, and in return, I stay with you. Forever. Grief mewed smugly.

How would you help me? Spark asked.

Not sure yet.

Spark unsheathed her claws, stabbing them into the soft dirt. Her eyes hurt as she stared at the ground, indecisive. Should she trust Grief? After all, Grief was the being that had caused her to feel depressed. But if she could help, Spark wanted help more than anything. And Grief was right in some things. The she-cat had never left Spark since she arrived, unlike Claw or Demonclaw or Leaf. Yet she was plain evil.

You know I can hear that. Grief said in a voice of mock pain.

Alright, I'll trust you. Help me, and you can stay with me. Spark agreed to her deal.

Excellent! Now, I think you should- Grief stopped talking as a loud yowl caught every cat's attention.

"Stop! Stop the fighting!" Demonclaw had yowled for silence and peace.

Grief, where is Demonclaw and who is that imposter?

Grief let out a deep purr. ***Don't worry, he's still there. But not for long...***

Tell me more! Spark demanded but Grief fell silent.

A cat stepped forward. She was a black she-cat with amber eyes.

"Demonclaw, I challenge you to a fight." The she-cat said with guarded and strong eyes.

Respect immediately welled in Spark and she watched with interest as the two cats sparred, trying to mask her feelings of pain and fear.

"Brother. I have given you too many chances. Ever since we were kits, play-fighting, you unsheathed your claws. You hurt me. You bullied me. You don't feel any remorse. You don't feel guilt. You don't feel love. You're not a cat, Demonclaw. You're a monster. And I don't feel any loyalty to you anymore. You were never loyal to the things that matter to me most either. Goldenperch. ThunderClan. You allied yourself with DarkClan and a bunch of worthless rogues." The black she-cat hissed.

Wow. StarClan, that was good. Are you seeing this, Grief?

I certainly am, Grief replied.

Not many cats saw it, but Spark could see Demonclaw flinching and remorse in his eyes. Spark had to help him.

"Kill her, Demonclaw!" she cheered.

"Echoflight. You're right." Demonclaw said finally. "And that's why I need to reverse the mistakes. Make the world right again."

"You don't understand, brother. You don't forgive and you've never lifted a claw to help anyone. That cat, Spark? She's just the proof of your disloyalty. I thought you actually liked Dawnpaw, but perhaps I was wrong." Echoflight was on a roll, Spark noticed.

How ironic. You can notice what a stranger is doing but you can't notice what is happening to yourself.

What? Spark growled at Grief.

"I know." Demonclaw fell to the ground.

No! Demonclaw!

"And I'm glad that I got to understand the meaning of love before I died. I was a selfish cat." He mewed to Echoflight.

"I WAS A SELFISH CAT!" he suddenly yowled. "I only thought of myself. Which is why my death will fix things. Goodbye, Echoflight. Goodbye, Goldenperch. I'm sorry that your kit had to end up like this."

I...

Did you hear that, Spark? He doesn't like you. He didn't even say goodbye to you.

Spark fought back wails and she pressed back. Perhaps Grief really was right.

Demonclaw said something to Goldenperch and Echoflight before turning to Spark. Upon seeing his eyes, she ran forward and nuzzled him.

"Oh, Demonclaw," she cried.

"Shh, Spark. Teach your kits about forgiveness and teach..." he

rasped. "Don't teach them how to be evil. T-teach them ab-bout mistakes and h-h-how to stay on the p-path...good..."

Then he stopped moving.

Spark's limbs stopped moving as her heart skipped a beat. Those bright blue eyes had dulled almost instantly, his fur already stained with blood from his many wounds.

Demonclaw's body lay there, unmoving, as Spark let out a keen howl of grief. Even the being in her body that had become more of a companion than a nuisance in the past few hours was silent.

"Demonclaw!" a golden tabby yowled, grief thick in her voice as well.

She must have known him.

Of course, she did.

But Grief's snide remarks weren't as strong as before, almost as if the being was conflicted.

"Our deputy!" a Dar Forest cat shouted.

Spark wrinkled her nose, her eyes still wide and fixed on Demonclaw's body. How could the fox-hearts only care about his status as deputy? He had been so much more.

So much more... Grief echoed.

A twinge in Spark's stomach made her gasp in pain. Still, she stayed by Demonclaw's side, ignoring her stomach.

You can't ignore them forever, Spark. Grief warned her. ***Your and...Demonclaw's kits are almost ready.***

Spark lifted her head.

I will stay alive for these kits. They are all I have left.

The golden tabby approached Spark hesitantly. "I'm sorry. Did you

love him?"

How dare she.

Very rude, isn't she? Grief sneered.

"I did." Spark replied, her voice shaking as a fresh wave of grief surged over her. "And I'm carrying his kits."

Spark's Grief - Chapter 6

Spark trudged to the ThunderClan camp with the golden tabby. Goldenperch, Demonclaw's mother, she had learnt. They arrived at a thorn barrier, where a golden-brown she-cat questioned Goldenperch.

"Goldenperch, what *happened*?" The she-cat questioned urgently.

"Echoflight killed Demonclaw in a challenge. I brought his mate back; she's wounded and carrying kits." Goldenperch stepped back and Spark dipped her head.

Pfft. Wounded and carrying kits? What a mouse-brain. You're hurting inside, not outside. Idiot. Grief snorted.

Spark managed a small purr at Grief's words.

Yeah, that's right. Idiot.

"I'm Spark. Now that Demonclaw is dead, I would like to join your group." Spark acted confident and puffed her chest out.

Nice job, acting confident. Does that mean you're not actually confident and you're just weak?

Shut up, Grief.

"I'll deal with you after the battle ends," Luckystar growled. "Go to the warriors' den and stay there."

Spark dipped her head before heading in the direction of the warriors' den. Once there, she told a blind cat that she was expecting kits and he immediately ushered her to the nursery.

"How do you walk and stuff?" she asked bluntly.

The cat glared at her. "I smell."

Yes, you do smell. You smell like blood and herbs. Grief couldn't resist making a comment.

Spark held in a purr and nodded. Inside the nursery, the only warning she got was a sharp howl from Grief before she collapsed on the ground, convulsing in pain.

Spark gritted her teeth. "Will it be a difficult kitting?"

"One of the kits is coming out backwards," Jayfeather announced. "But otherwise it'll be fine. Larkleaf, fetch the kitting herbs." He said to his apprentice.

Larkleaf left the den and returned a moment later with some leaves. Spark barely noticed it with Grief screaming in her head and Jayfeather staring at her intently.

Breathe, Spark! I've spent enough time on you, you can't die on me now! Grief screeched.

"Eat the raspberry leaves, it'll help," Jayfeather nudged the leaves closer.

Spark licked them up. They tasted foul, and she made a face.

Do you reckon that Jayfeather* smelt *them to know what they were? Grief jeered to distract her.

Is everything you say rude and hurtful? Spark shot back.

Ah, I missed this. Our banter.

"Bite down on the stick if you feel pain, but don't stop pushing," Larkleaf suggested, pushing a stick in front of her face.

"Okay." Spark took the stick in her teeth. Soon, pain shot through her. She bit down hard, feeling the stick splinter in her jaws. Bits of stick fell into her mouth and she almost gagged.

Don't gag.

Kind of obvious, if you ask me.

"The first kit is coming! Larkleaf, get ready!" Jayfeather ordered.

Spark continued pushing and finally, a wet bundle of fur came out. Its feet were coming first.

So that was what Jayfeather meant.

Obviously. He told you it was coming feet first, no surprises here.

It slid onto the moss with a *plop*.

Spark dropped the stick immediately, love swelling up from inside her, replacing the grief from Demonclaw's death as she watched Larkleaf nip the sac off the kit and lick it to warm it up.

"Hold the stick!" Jayfeather growled.

Bossy.

Spark rolled her eyes before hastily obeying, picking the stick up again and waited for the next shoot of pain.

By dusk, she had birthed two kits, but Jayfeather thought there was still one more. So, they worked until midnight, until strong pain caused her to lie down. She pushed and a small shape fell out. Larkleaf set to work on the kit while Jayfeather stopped the blood that was coming.

Spark rested her head in her paws. Then, sudden panic shot through her as Larkleaf stopped licking.

"I'm sorry, Spark, but the third kit is dead." Larkleaf mewed sadly.

Faker. You couldn't care less.

Jayfeather placed the first two kits at her belly and left her in peace. Larkleaf glanced again at her and left too.

Sparklooked down at the two kits suckling her milk and decided she'd protect thesekits with her life. The first-born was a brown tabby tom with amber eyes. He was beautiful and he wiggled from side to side as he suckled. Spark drew a sharp breath as she realized

he reminded her of Demonclaw.

The second born was a she-cat. She had light brown fur and green eyes. There were faint dapples of darker browns on her coat that Spark immediately fell in love with.

The third kit lay in a corner of the nursery. It was dead. It had been a ginger tabby tom. Spark wished she could've known him, at least talked to him, but he was gone.

Gone. You're so useless, Spark. You can't even kit properly without the curse affecting you.

I denied the curse before. But I think you're right. Spark thought, sinking into deeper depths of depression.

A she-cat ducked into the nursery, startling Spark.

It's Dawnpaw. Grief informed her.

"Who are you?" Dawnpaw asked.

"Spark. These are Demonclaw's kits." She replied softly. "And I can see that you loved him."

Dawnpaw gave off heart-broken scents and Spark knew immediately that she was right when Dawnpaw froze. Betrayal was etched on her face.

"I did," she mewed quietly. "And I still do. But he's dead."

"I understand." Spark mewed.

Dawnpaw twined her tail with Spark. Both she-cats were equally miserable, and both had suffered much grief.

"What will you name the kits?" Dawnpaw asked quietly.

Spark thought about it for a moment. Nothing came to mind.

Grief, help me.

How ironic. I thought you wanted to be rid of me?

I did, but you've never betrayed me. You're the only cat that I can trust.

Very well. How about Autumn? You know, the season that humans use for leaf-fall? For the she-cat, of course.

"The brown she-cat is going to be called Autumn," Spark purred.

What about the tom?

You know what he reminds me of?

No, what?

You when I wasn't inside you yet.

Was that regret in Grief's voice?

You were wild. A wind that couldn't be controlled. And I sense that this tom will be very wild.

So, what are you suggesting?

Wild Wind. It's perfect.

"And the brown tabby will be called Wild Wind." Spark told her.

"I like it. I heard there was a third," Dawnpaw looked around.

It felt like thorns were stabbing her heart and she winced. "He died."

How about Ember? That way, you can remember your brother, Fire.

You know about Fire? How- never mind.

"He would've been Ember, for his ginger pelt." Spark mewed.

"I'm so sorry. I had a kit die too." Dawnpaw choked.

Suddenly, another cat rushed in. "Dawnpaw, we're having our warrior ceremony!"

"I'll be back, Spark."

You've been abandoned, Spark.

I thought she was different...

Hmm. Grief mused.

Spark stared into the brambles of the nursery so intently yet unfocused at the same time. She turned around to see Dawnmist was back.

"Are you okay?" she mewed.

"No. I've had too much grief in my life." Spark replied in a voice that was barely a whisper.

That's right. So much that I live in you now.

"Tell me about it," Dawnmist purred. "I've had a fair bit as well."

Definitely not as much as you, Grief assured her. ***I don't live inside her. She's recovered a fair bit.***

Thanks, Grief.

"Have your parents died before you opened your eyes? Have you had two true loves in your whole life; one depressed and one dead? Have you had your littermates killed a few seconds after you know their names?" Spark raged at Dawnpaw.

"I didn't know. I'm sorry." Dawnpaw said comfortingly. "I didn't know you had so much grief."

Not helpful!

"Have you had your best friend murdered by a cat you looked up to?" Spark continued, angry, her eyes burning red. "Have you had a friend that ignored you for three moons before dying in the same battle that took Demonclaw? No, I don't think so!"

"How do you keep sane with all that grief?" Dawnpaw asked with

wide eyes.

"I don't like it. But I don't have a choice." Spark answered. "And I don't know how to deal with it. My mate killed, my heart shattered, and one of my kits dead before it lived. I have this...being. She lives in my chest. Her name is Grief, and she puts me down. She breaks my courage and sneers and jeers at me. What do I do, Dawnpaw?"

"I've suffered much too. My first mate exiled, my second murdered, my only kit born dead. We're so similar." Dawnpaw said. "But I follow my heart."

"I understand." Spark managed a weak purr. "It was nice meeting you."

Spark lay down, exhausted, Grief silent. Her last thought before dropping off into sleep was that maybe Dawnpaw could be a good friend.

A/N

SOO there's a slightly longer than usual chapter for you! I'm really enjoying building Spark's character and how she and Grief are slowly becoming friends

Spark's Grief - Chapter 7

"Goodbye, Dawnmist." Spark mewed softly to the ginger she-cat. "Stay strong. Don't let Demonclaw ruin your life."

"Don't leave, please." Dawnmist replied, nuzzling Spark.

"I don't want my kits to become warriors." Spark looked down at Autumn and Wild Wind.

Spark and Dawnmist had buried Ember together after she had recovered from the shock.

Spark trekked through the woods, Dawnmist at her side, Ember swinging from her jaws. Grief was howling in her heart as she found the perfect spot in her old home.

"You lived in this barn?" Dawnmist asked.

Spark gazed at the barn, feeling the memories rush back. After her family had died, she had run for her life. This barn had been her home for a few weeks.

"Yes," she breathed.

Spark remembered Ember being lowered into the ground, the dirt covering his bright fur until finally, it couldn't be seen again.

It's been half a moon... she thought sadly.

"Goodbye, Spark." Dawnmist twined tails Spark. "I hope I see you again."

"You've been good company to me during my stay. Goodbye, Dawnmist." Spark glanced at her kits before taking them out of the camp.

Worry flooded her as they were both silent. None of them had uttered a word since being born. A she-cat named Snowfall had

assured her that it was perfectly normal, and that warrior kits were just more developed, but Spark was still worried.

"Let's go," Spark told her kits, sensing their unease.

Autumn bravely took a step forward, her fur rippling. Wild Wind followed until they were headed towards the Twolegplace.

"We're going to visit Ember's grave, okay?" Spark asked. "Then, we'll leave. We'll leave and be happy forever."

Wild Wind nuzzled into her soundlessly.

Sighing, Spark continued to lead the way until the grass turned into hard concrete. They plodded on, even when it rained lightly.

Finally, Spark spotted the familiar bush that marked Ember's grave.

Spark lowered Ember into the hole, trying not to look away.

I'm sorry.

Me too. *Spark thought.* He doesn't deserve it.

Rustling made her ears prick as she turned slowly to face the barn.

SPARK! Whatever you do, don't go in. You don't need to-

Spark ignored Grief and padded into the barn, taking Autumn and Wild Wind with her. A small paw poked out of a human nest and slowly, a kitten emerged.

Spark cocked her head. It couldn't be more than two moons old.

"Hello?" it asked.

"Hi, I won't hurt you." Spark breathed, her eyes stinging in pain.

You shouldn't have gone in. Grief growled.

The kit was identical to Ember. The same ginger fur. Even its tabby stripes were the same. The only difference was that Ember's eyes had been closed, while this tom's eyes were open.

They were a beautiful green, one that reminded her of ThunderClan's forest.

Wild Wind reacted first, padding up to the tom and sniffing him. Autumn followed more cautiously.

The ginger tom shivered, and Spark felt a pang of worry as she saw that he was sick. His fur was crusted with dirt and his paws were wet. His nose was dry, and he coughed occasionally.

Then, Wild Wind did something amazing. He spoke.

"Brother?"

Spark collapsed on the ground as Grief whispered to her.

They think he's their brother. You can't just leave him here now.

Spark collected herself before picking up the tom. "How about Emberstorm for a name?"

The kit nodded eagerly before snuggling into her. Touched, Spark used her tail to pull in Autumn and Wild Wind and the four of them just lay on the straw.

Spark was aware of Grief talking to her, perhaps some mean jokes or sneers, but they were drowned out by Emberstorm's sniffles, Autumn's rustling as she made herself comfortable and Wild Wind's light grunts.

The next day, Spark decided that Emberstorm needed to see a human medicine cat. The question was where to find one.

Over the night, he had taken a turn for worse and was barely moving.

You shouldn't have gotten attached.

Grief was back.

Spark hovered anxiously outside a human house. She had decided that it was probably best if she gave Emberstorm to the humans so

they could heal him. Then, she would rescue him.

"Are you okay with this?" Spark mewed quietly.

"Okay." Emberstorm echoed.

"Okay then." Spark placed Emberstorm outside the house before yowling at the top of her lungs.

"HUMANS! COME OUT!"

Suddenly, a door clicked open and Spark whirled around into a bush where Autumn and Wild Wind were hidden. The human clicked its teeth, making some noises, before picking Emberstorm up and taking him inside.

Yes!

Not good, Spark. You're making trouble for yourself.

You can see the future now? Yeah right, and I'm dead.

Yes, I can see the future.

Spark paused.

You really can?

Yes. I can.

Tell me something about the future. Spark demanded.

Beside her, Autumn twitched, and Wild Wind glared at the human house.

I can't tell you anything. The other beings forbid me to. Grief snarled in resentment. ***Believe me, if I could, I would. I've grown to like you. You're a peculiar little cat, you know?***

How?

Not many cats could face that much grief.

Spark sighed before tucking Autumn and Wild Wind closer into her before closing her eyes herself.

"Spark!"

Spark curled closer into a ball, still sleepy.

"Spark!"

Spark, get up.

Shut up.

Emberstorm's back.

Spark was up immediately. She focused on the ball of fur in front of her and her heart melted. He was perfect in every way now. His eyes were bright, and his fur groomed neatly. He was no longer coughing. The sickness was out of him.

"Oh, Emberstorm," Spark licked his ears affectionately.

"Let's go." Emberstorm mewed.

Spark dipped her head before sneaking her kits away from the human house.

"Where are we going?" Emberstorm asked hesitantly.

"We're going to build a home for us. We'll be wild and free." Spark replied confidently. "I promise I won't fail you."

Spark led them past hills, along valleys, up trees, across rivers and through Twolegplaces until finally, they reached a perfect place.

Spark licked Autumn's head before nuzzling Wild Wind then finally wrapping her tail around Emberstorm. The four of them looked over a small dip in a valley, the sunset casting glows around their new home.

"Beautiful." Autumn said her first word.

Spark couldn't have agreed more.

Spark's Grief - Chapter 8

Spark growled sullenly as she poked at the rabbit she had caught. It was thin and skinny and most of it would be going to her kits, anyways.

You can't help them. You're so weak you can't even feed your kits. They're supposed to be the most important things in your life.

Shut up! Spark yowled. *Shut up!*

"Mother?" Emberstorm's voice broke into her thoughts.

Spark gazed down at the rabbit to see it was all torn apart, its blood spattered on the floor.

"Sorry," she muttered. "I'll hunt another one."

Spark left the cave gratefully and took gulps of air.

You can't even hunt. You've been looking all day and that rabbit was all you found.

Angered, Spark searched even harder until she caught the scent of a mouse. Above her, the Greenleaf sun warmed her body as she stalked the mouse.

You're horrible at everything. You should just die.

I thought you were going to help me!

I changed my mind. This is what needs to- Grief cut herself off.

Spark glanced back at the mouse, but it had scurried off.

"You damned being!" Spark shrieked, convulsing in guilt.

"Calm down."

"Shut up, Grief." Spark snapped.

Then, she realized it wasn't Grief.

"Grief?" the voice hissed.

Spark turned to locate the voice, but her senses were foggy. Then, the cat stepped out from behind a tree.

Spark stared at the black she-cat who stared right back.

"Who're you?" she asked rudely not caring anymore.

"Eclipse. And I'm here to help you."

"Help me hunt. I have kits." Spark rasped.

"Shhh." Eclipse mewed. "I know."

Spark's head pounded as her heart squirmed.

Why do I like Eclipse so much? I barely know her.

I can't tell you. You will be in the dark forever. No one will tell you anything.

Eclipse supported Spark as they stumbled back to the cave.

"Mother! You're back!" Emberstorm was immediately at the entrance, his fur bristling as he saw Eclipse. "Who's *dat*?"

"She's Eclipse," Spark choked. "And she'll take care of you."

Wild Wind came to the entrance too, but he was wailing. "Hungry!"

"Well, I don't have food!" Spark growled.

Don't treat them like this!

"Scary!" Autumn yelped, having followed Wild Wind.

They find you scary, don't treat them like that!

"Shut up!" Spark roared back. "All of you! Including you, Grief!"

No, I won't.

Shut up. Please.

I will if you leave your kits.

No. They're my kits. They're my responsibility.

Leave them.

No.

Leave.

No?

Leave!

Fine. But Eclipse stays.

Fine.

"Eclipse," Spark turned to the black she-cat. "Will you take care of my kits for a few days?"

"Sure! They seem like nice kittens." Eclipse flicked her tail.

"Wild Wind, you better behave," Spark warned the tom.

"No."

"You know like three words and one of them is *no*?" Spark yowled, her rage bubbling.

"Hungry." Wild Wind mewed quietly.

"I don't have food!" Spark caterwauled.

Beside her, Eclipse winced, disappointment in her eyes as she watched Spark talk to her kits.

"Hungry." Wild Wind repeated.

Spark lost all sense.

She leapt towards Wild Wind, catching him by his scruff and storming out of the cave. She took Wild Wind down to the river and glared at him. "Stay. There. Until I come back and get you."

Wild Wind stared up at Spark with shock and disappointment on his face as well. Guilt pierced her and she took one last look at him before running.

Spark ran away from her family's bodies. Tears pricked her eyes as claws latched onto her back.

"Go away!" Spark cried.

"Alright, little kit." The tom snarled, his teeth red with blood.

It had been exactly forty-two sunrises since the deaths. Forty-two sunrises since the tom had decided to chase her. To hunt her down.

Spark squeaked in terror and ran, ducking underneath bushes, not caring if they scraped her, all too aware of the large crashing of footsteps behind her...

Spark strode away from Wild Wind and the river, the terror from her flashback still in her.

All you do is run, little kit.

How did you know-?

I can see into your mind.

Suddenly, a weird feeling came over Spark. It felt like there was a bug buzzing around her head, but inside her head.

Aha.

W-What?

Day one hundred and eighty-six.

Spark stopped in her tracks. Her thoughts swirled around in a circle as she remembered how close to death she had been.

The tom leaned over her, his eyes wide and threatening. "Time to die, little kit."

Spark had scrambled back, hitting a tree.

The tom plunged his teeth into her neck.

Spark yowled in pain, her body thrashing as she tried to rid herself from his teeth.

"Help!" she cried. "Help!"

Pain spread through her, choking her. The world suddenly seemed to fade as her vision dimmed.

When she opened her eyes next, it was to see a strange creature bending over her. Panicked, the strange creature's face flashed from the tom's and back. It had two legs and no fur apart from some on its head. It lifted a furless paw.

The paw was holding a long pointy thing that was stabbed into her fur.

That was all Spark had remembered of that day.

Spark opened her eyes to see large claw marks in the ground where she had dug them in.

Two hundred and twelve days, Grief. He was after me for two hundred and twelve days. Then he disappeared.

I know. Are you alright, little kit?

Stop!

Spark hurled herself at a tree angrily, trying to throw Grief out of her body.

"Get...OUT!"

Yet Grief still clung on.

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Author's Note-

Short chapter sorry. I promise I'll have a longer one next time.

Spark's Grief - Chapter 9

A/N - TW in this chapter, there will be a warning as well

I won't leave that easily.

A bolt of inspiration hit Spark.

No. Don't do that. Seriously.

You can't stop me. Besides, no one will miss me.

Spark! Don't do it!* I *will miss you.

I don't want you anyways.

Oh, come on, Spark. I've only made your life more interesting.

Interesting?! INTERESTING?! You call this interesting? Would you like me to recount my life story to you? Parents: dead. Brother: dead. Dusk chased after me for over six moons. My first love hated me. My best friend was killed. My second love and former mate was killed. One of my kits died. I have flashbacks of Dusk. And to top it all, Grief, guess what? I have you *stuck inside me! I'm insane, say it. I dare you to.*

You're insane.

Fine. I'll do it.

Spark, don't do it. It won't help. Trust me.

TRUST YOU? What is that supposed to mean? Because I definitely don't trust the cat who messed up my life!

Spark stormed out of the hole in the ground she had been using as a home for the past three days and to the river where she had left Wild Wind.

Spark, please don't. Don't do it!

I'm doing it just to annoy you at this point!

You risk everything if you do it. Please don't.

TW: $u1c1d3 - scroll down if you need to!

Spark ignored Grief and padded up to the water. Taking a deep breath, she let herself fall in.

Spark let out a strangled mew as her head dipped underneath the freezing water. Already, her paws were beginning to go numb. Her eyes struggled to stay open as her she sunk deeper.

Her breath already used up, she opened her mouth, letting the water rush in. Choking and spluttering, her head hit a rock at the bottom of the river.

SPARK! Go back up to the surface!

NO. No, Grief. I'm done listening to you. You've lied and lied and lied. I don't need to listen to you!

Spark's head bounced off the rock and hit it again. This time, it was enough to knock her unconscious.

Grief's POV

Grief sighed before gently lifting Spark's head up from the rock.

A warm feeling spread over Grief and she looked down at her gray fur to see a tinge of ginger spreading over it.

"Courage! Come out! I know you're here!" Grief called, her haunted blue eyes surveying the river.

The ginger tom padded out, his amber eyes meeting hers. "She can't die."

"I *know* that, you idiot!" Grief spat.

"I think you overdid it a little." Courage murmured.

He raised his tail and laid it on Spark's unmoving face. A warm ginger glow spread from Courage to Spark and the light yellow she-cat spluttered as she regained consciousness.

"Stop! I have to wake her!" Grief yowled.

"You can't! I am the only one who can!" Courage snarled back.

Enraged, Grief bit onto Courage's tail, forcing him to let go. Courage retaliated by swiping his paw at Grief's head, knocking her off. The two spirits fought, scratched, bit and yowled as they fought over Spark's body. None of them noticed Spark slowly drifting to the surface, watching with wide eyes.

Grief let out a battle yowl and a faint blue glow spread over her. Immediately, Courage's eyes dimmed, and gray spots appeared on his fur. Purring, Grief turned around to see Spark watching them fight, the yellow she-cat's eyes drooping as she struggled to fight the water, Courage's blessing still on her fur.

"Sorry, Courage." Grief murmured to the other spirit before throwing herself back into Spark.

Spark's POV

Spark woke up to see two cats fighting in the murky depths of the water. However, she realized they weren't quite cats. One of them was gray with blue eyes and the other was a ginger tom.

Is that Grief?

Spark searched inside her for any trace of the spirit that was constantly nagging her, but she couldn't find her. Joy flooded her.

I'm free.

Spark looked down at her body. A ginger glow surrounded her. Bravely, Spark swam out of the ginger glow and towards the

surface. Below her, Grief let out a loud yowl and the ginger tom sort of faded. Then, Spark shuddered as Grief turned to face her. Haunted blue eyes met green eyes. Then, Grief's form blurred, and she became a gray ball radiating misery.

The ball shot into Spark's open mouth.

I'm back, little kit.

All Spark's bravery failed her, and she drifted deeper into the water, only to see the ginger tom bringing her to the surface and placing her onto the bank.

"I am the being of Courage," the tom mewed in a deep voice. "And you have my blessing."

Exhausted, Spark collapsed on the bank. Her last conscious though was Grief whispering to her.

You shall always have my blessing.

End of TW

Spark woke up to painfully find out that Grief was back.

Just when I thought I was rid of her...

I will stay with you forever.

Spark growled in anger. *Leave! You've made my life a nightmare.*

Correction. I didn't. Dusk did.

Spark hated it when Grief made logical comments like those. Dusk *had* made her life a nightmare. He had murdered her family, chased after her for two hundred and twelve days, and almost killed her. Without him, she would be living with her family, happy and safe.

Spark shook herself, letting her damp fur dry in the sun, wondering

about her kits and Eclipse.

Will they be alright? Do I trust Eclipse?

As if her thought had summoned the black she-cat, Eclipse stepped out of a bush, a rabbit dangling from her jaws.

"Hello, Spark." Eclipse mewed gently. "Are you okay?" she added politely.

"I'm *fine*!" Spark protested weakly.

Eclipse nosed her fur only to recoil in shock. "You're soaking wet! Come back to the cave, please."

"I'm fine on the outside, Eclipse," Spark snapped before realizing she hadn't meant to say that.

"On the outside?" Eclipse sat down next to her. "Me too."

"What happened to you?" Spark mewed.

"My best friend left me." Eclipse sighed. "She left only a few days ago. That's why I was alone when I met you."

A best friend?

"Who?" Spark pressed.

Eclipse met her eyes before whispering the name that made Spark's nerves tingle and her brain freeze.

"Dawnmist."

Spark's Grief - Chapter 10

Spark cast a longing look back towards the river before taking the hard path. She followed Eclipse back to their cave and shared stories about Dawnmist, played with the kits, and taught Emberstorm about the world around them. Then, one day, Spark came back to the cave after going hunting alone to see Eclipse wasn't there.

Where is she?

Spark, she's left you. Just like everyone else.

Numb with pain, Spark staggered into the cave.

"What's wrong, mother?" Emberstorm asked.

"Mother?" Wild Wind echoed.

It turned out that Eclipse had saved Wild Wind shortly before Spark had gone to the river.

Autumn was still quiet, picking at a mouse.

"Kits, where has Eclipse gone?" Spark asked.

"She left." Emberstorm stated clearly.

She left, Spark. It's true. She won't be coming back.

Please, Grief. Tell her to come back! I actually liked her. She was a friend.

I cannot change the past, Spark. And the future is set in stone.

Spark pushed past Emberstorm, who was closest to the entrance, and left the den. "I'm going to hunt. To clear my mind. Look after the other kits, Emberstorm."

Emberstorm nodded slowly before nuzzling Autumn closer to himself and Wild Wind.

Spark looked towards the river and a burning desire filled her. Storming down to the river, courage filled her as she prepared to dive in.

Spark, DON'T.

I must. Everyone keeps leaving me, Grief. You're right. I remember when you told me I was a curse. I believe you now, happy?

No! I'm not hap-

Grief paused. Spark looked around worriedly, wondering what could have caused Grief to stop in one of her lectures.

Spark, leave the river. Right now.

Unlike earlier arguments, Grief's voice was firm and there was a tone of warning in it.

Why? Spark challenged. *I don't listen to you. I'm staying.*

Spark, you must leave. Immediately.

No. I won't-

Spark was suddenly bowled over by a red shape. Yelping, she clawed at the animal.

Who attacked me?

Backing away, Spark got a closer look at the animal. It had a cat shaped body with a long snout.

It was a fox.

Fine. I'll kill it.

SPARK! LEAVE RIGHT NOW!

Spark ignored Grief and charged at the fox. It was wiry and thin,

but Spark's angry and sad mind didn't notice. She didn't notice its razor-sharp teeth either, so it came as a surprise when it bit her on her right foreleg.

Blood poured out of the wound and Spark froze.

It was day one hundred and twenty-two. The tom leered and jeered at her before biting her on her right foreleg. Blood gushed out and Spark was reminded of her mother's death.

Perhaps this is when I die.

The tom taunted her before turning to see a fox. His eyes grew wide and he shot away before Spark could even say something. The fox turned on her...

The fox turned on her, growling in its throat.

Spark, this fox is angry.

I know *that!*

No, Spark. It wants revenge.

Spark had leapt at the fox despite her injuries. She had been so reckless in a brief fight, that the fox had been killed. Surprised and shocked, she had stepped forwards only to bump into a fox kit.

"It had been guarding its kit!" Spark gasped. "And...that means this fox..."

Is its kit. Correct.

The fox opened its mouth and bit her other foreleg. She crouched over in pain.

Spark, this is your last chance. Run!

Spark obeyed. She swiped the fox one last time, then clouted it over the ears, before hobbling over to the cave, dripping blood.

Spark collapsed onto the hard floor, Emberstorm immediately at her

side.

"Mother! Are you okay?" he yelped.

"I'm going to die." Spark suddenly saw clarity.

"Mother...don't leave me!"

"I'm sorry, little one. I don't have a choice. The stars predicted this. Emberstorm, it has been three moons since I rescued you. Three moons...I love you, Emberstorm, even though you are not mine. Autumn, Wild Wind, you two will both grow and become wonderful cats...unlike me."

Spark shuddered, her last breath leaving her. "Do not try to avenge me. Find a peaceful solution instead. I love you all..."

Spark stood up, her spirit leaving her body. A gray she-cat stood next to her.

"Grief." Spark dipped her head. "You were right. You were always right."

"I know." Grief spoke. "Courage, come on."

The ginger tom emerged from her body as well.

"Courage. Thank you for giving me the courage to continue on." Spark said respectfully.

"We will escort you to your final resting place. You do not belong among StarClan, or the Dark Forest. You will find your place with Truth."

Spark saw flashes of the future and blurred images of her kits, before nodding.

"Goodbye, kits, for the last time."

A/N

Wow! So I planned it to be much better than this ending, but I

think this is okay. Any opinions?

Spark's Grief - Epilogue

Grief sighed resentfully. Spark had died after all.

"Come on, Grief. We have to go." Courage mewed quietly.

"I don't want to leave her." Grief growled stubbornly.

"Grief," Courage tried. "We *have* to go to the Annual Meeting."

"I don't care." Grief flared back. "Go without me."

The Annual Meeting was very basic. It was a meeting between all six of the spiritual beings. They would give updates about their cat that Truth had chosen and would be assigned another one.

"Come on, they're waiting for us." Courage nudged her.

"I don't want a new cat."

Courage touched Grief's paw with his own and looked into her eyes. "Grief."

"Fine!" Grief shook him off. "Let's go then."

Courage led her towards the oak hollow. Every year, they met here. Immediately, she felt the wrath of Truth come over her. Shivering, she looked up towards the huge white tom.

"Truth," Grief muttered.

"Welcome. You are late." Truth boomed.

"I don't care."

"What she means, sir," Courage rolled his eyes. "Is that we're sorry."

Truth let out a deep purr. "Very well. Anger, report."

Sitting on a log, a red tom with a bushy tail and amber eyes stood

up. "You already know. Demonclaw has died from the stress. But yes, I managed to make him fairly angry. Grief, you should know that."

Grief unsheathed her claws, digging them into the ground.

"Good. Courage, report." Truth commanded.

"Salem has improved drastically since I joined her body." Courage puffed out his chest.

"Have you blessed anyone else?" Truth hissed.

"No, sir." Courage said confidently.

"You lie. Tell the Truth!"

"Fine, sir. I have blessed Spark. If I didn't, she would have died at the wrong time." Courage growled.

"Joy, report." Truth mewed lazily.

A yellow she-cat stood up, her yellow eyes casting beams of joy across the hollow. "I have succeeded, sir. Amberclaw is very happy with her life."

"Good. Fear, you next."

Grief shivered as the black tom started to speak.

"Duskpelt is trapped in a sphere of eternal paranoia."

"Grief." Truth turned his blue eyes on her. "Go."

"You all know! Why should I say it?" She snapped. "But if you must, Spark is *dead*!"

"Love, report."

The albino she-cat shook out her fur quickly. "I have failed."

"I have sensed it." Truth snarled. "Very well. An innocent cat shall be doomed now. Love, you must match Ebonywind with a cat as

dark as the shadows."

A/N

To you all who have read or started the novels "Alone", you shall know what this cliffhanger means...muahahaha. Maybe a little spoiler for the rest of Alone.

This little "prophecy" is simple, hence the spoiler.

But yes! Spark's Grief is finished and wow this is probably one of my favourite warrior cats fanfics that I have written. I really liked the idea of having Grief stuck in her chest and how she wanted to get rid of her and how Grief hated it there at the beginning, then got super attached.

The next novella in Beyond the Clans is Autumn's Promise, which is about...drumroll...

Spark's kit, Autumn. Wow. So hard to guess. It picks up where we left off in Chapter 10 just through Autumn's POV, and yes, the months/ages are a little off but I think it's okay.

I hope you enjoyed Spark's Grief!

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End of Spark's Grief

Start of Autumn's Promise

(This is not a chapter.)

If you have any questions, I am happy to answer them in this chapter's comment section **only**

Autumn's Promise - Prologue

Firestar stepped closer to the pool of water, gazing into it sadly. His nose twitched as a gray tom with stars in his fur stepped out from behind a bush.

"Hello, Graystripe. I didn't think I'd find you here," Firestar sighed.

"I only came because she threatened to kill me. I had to bring her. I'm sorry, Firestar." Graystripe ducked his head before revealing Spark.

"Show me my kits, Firestar. Right *now*!" the light yellow she-cat growled.

"Spark, we've told you about this. You're not StarClan. You won't be able to see." Firestar sighed wearily.

"I don't care! I'll believe in StarClan. After all, I'm here! So, by StarClan, show me!"

"Come here," Firestar moved backwards to give Spark space. "Stare into the water. Think of your kits."

Spark obeyed at once, a glimmer of excitement in her eyes.

"Sooo," Graystripe mewed awkwardly. "How's everything going with Grief?"

"I never told you about Grief." Spark turned around; eyes narrowed in suspicion. "How do you know?"

"StarClan knows all." Graystripe stated simply.

Spark huffed before turning back to the pool. "I haven't heard from her since I died. Oh! I see something!"

Firestar hurried to her side, pressing his pelt into hers by accident. "These are your kits?"

"Yes," Spark breathed. "The light brown she-cat is Autumn. The brown tabby is Wild Wind. And the ginger tabby is Emberstorm."

"Autumn?" Firestar flinched. "Are you sure?"

"Of course, I'm sure!" Spark snarled. "What's wrong?"

"Autumn has a big future set out for her." Graystripe chimed in.

"How big?" Spark questioned nervously.

Firestar flicked his ears. "Here."

He touched the pool with his paw, and it rippled before changing into a reflection of Autumn standing in front of over a dozen cats. Then, it changed to a scene of Autumn leading the same cats out of a fire."

"Wow. That's my kit!" Spark cried.

Firestar met Graystripe's eyes discreetly.

I can't tell her about everything else.

Autumn's Promise - Chapter 1

Hunger kept sleep at bay.

Autumn turned in the ragged straw of her 'nest', looking at Wild Wind.

"I'm hungry." She mewed quietly.

"Me too," Wild Wind comforted her.

"Emberstorm! Help us!" Autumn wailed, her nose stretching out for her older brother.

Soon, his ginger tabby shape came into view.

"Sorry," Emberstorm mewed apologetically. "I don't have any food. But when I'm older, I'll be the *best* hunter ever! I'll never let you two starve again!"

Autumn let out a weak purr. It had been a moon since her mother had left her.

"Why did mother leave?" she questioned.

Emberstorm looked uncomfortable. And *really* guilty.

"You look strange," Wild Wind commented. "Tell us, Emberstorm. Why *did* mother leave?"

Autumn remembered with a pang of sadness that Wild Wind had been taken from them once. He had been gone for only a few sunrises, but Autumn had had trouble sleeping every night. Now, starving and helpless, she was just grateful she had both her littermates with her.

"Uhh," Emberstorm muttered. "I think she had to go, uh, to a different home."

"You're lying! Brothers don't lie!" Wild Wind fired.

Once again, like usual, Autumn was left out. She didn't mind.

"I'm not lying!' Emberstorm protested. "I never lie! Brave cats don't lie!"

"So, you're saying you're a weak cat?" Autumn sniffed.

Wild Wind turned to his sister with respect. He was about to open his mouth when he stopped.

"What is it?" Autumn asked, curious.

"Do you hear that?" Wild Wind hissed.

Emberstorm pricked his ears and padded to the cave entrance. His eyes widened and he raced out of the cave.

I would follow him, Autumn thought ruefully. *But I don't have the strength.*

Soon, Emberstorm came back in, a black she-cat in tow.

She looks familiar.

Beside her, Wild Wind looked like he was having similar thoughts.

"Who're *you*?" Wild Wind snarled. "Stay back! I look small, but I'm very powerful!"

"I am Eclipse. I was a friend of your mother's. Where is she, anyway? I didn't take Spark as the abandoning kit type." The she-cat mewed in a soft, pretty voice.

"I don't know!" Wild Wind wailed. He hated it when he didn't know something.

Spark.

Mother has a name.

"But Wild Wind's right. Who are you?" Autumn interrogated eagerly;

her hunger forgotten.

"A friend of your mother's." the she-cat repeated. "And I'll save you. Come with me. I can take you to a safe place to live. You'll be warm, fed and happy there."

"We're not leaving!" Emberstorm mewed stubbornly.

"Yeah!" Autumn added. "Spark might come back!"

Emberstorm looked at her with a heartbroken expression.

"Emberstorm, you've been acting funny." Wild Wind turned on his brother. "What's going on?"

"Is she dea-" the she-cat asked Emberstorm before he cut in quickly.

"No!" but he nodded.

"I'm Eclipse. You might remember me. I took care of you when you were younger." The she-cat turned back to Autumn and Wild Wind.

Oh.

"Come with me. I'll help you stay safe." Eclipse urged, reaching out with a paw.

"No!" Wild Wind snarled, unsheathing his claws. "I don't trust you! You claim to know our mother, but I don't believe you!"

Eclipse's face softened. "Are you guys hungry?"

"Very!" Autumn's stomach growled.

"Not at all!" Wild Wind mewed at the same time.

"What he means," Emberstorm purred. "Is that we're starving."

Eclipse dipped her head before leaving the cave.

"I don't trust her." Wild Wind repeated.

"Wild Wind," Emberstorm tried. "Do you trust *me*?"

"Of course!" the brown tabby mewed, shocked.

"Then trust Eclipse. I know her better than you." Emberstorm's face darkened.

Emberstorm has secrets. And he's not sharing them. Hmph.

Soon, Eclipse was back, a rabbit in her mouth. She set it down and pushed it towards the kits. "Eat."

Autumn was too hungry, and she tucked in eagerly. Emberstorm followed quickly.

"I don't trust her." Wild Wind repeated before taking a bite.

Within seconds, the rabbit was devoured, and the kits' bellies were much fuller than they had been earlier.

"Emberstorm. Where is Spark?" Eclipse questioned the tom.

Emberstorm glanced at Autumn and Wild Wind before hissing something in Eclipse's ear. Her expression went from shock to horror to grief.

"I see." Eclipse mewed carefully. "And where did this...FOX!"

Eclipse bared her teeth at the cave entrance where a lean red creature stood, its pelt soaked with blood.

"It's hungry, and it wants you," Eclipse mewed without looking back. "Emberstorm, protect Wild Wind and Autumn."

"I don't need protecting!" Autumn protested and struggled to look over Emberstorm's broad frame.

Eclipse lunged at the fox, ducking its claw-swipe as she went. She scraped her front claws on its face while kicking its belly using her back claws. The fox let out a high-pitched whine, fresh blood running down its face.

I almost feel sorry for that fox.

Eclipse continued attacking relentlessly, using her claws to nick its ears and rip its flesh. Soon, it was more blood than fox.

The fox left.

Wild Wind gaped at Eclipse while Autumn danced around her excitedly.

"Teach me!" Autumn mewed.

"I trust you." Wild Wind declared.

"Alright, kits. I'll adopt you. You won't survive by yourself." Eclipse licked her chest fur, embarrassed by Autumn's worshipping. "But, as your new guardian, I'm going to tell you what happened to Spark."

"Tell." Wild Wind demanded.

Emberstorm cowered in a corner, his tail tucked between his legs.

"Emberstorm is not your real brother." Eclipse mewed quietly.

"He is!" Autumn argued.

"I know. You call him a brother, and that's okay. But he's not your blood brother. Your real brother died."

"Impossible!" Wild Wind dropped his head.

"Spark told me this bit. We were friends when she was still...here. Her third kit was identical to Emberstorm. His name was Ember. When she left the place she had kitted, she found Emberstorm and took him in. She raised him as her own." Eclipse explained.

"What happened to Spark?" Autumn begged.

"A fox attacked her. She managed to escape, though. I don't know where she is right now." Eclipse's ear twitched.

In the corner of the cave, Emberstorm came out of the ball, blinking at Eclipse gratefully.

"I'm going to take you to where I live. It's a place called the Dynasty

of Truth. The camp is hidden in a small ravine in the mountains." Eclipse led them out of the cave. "It's not far from here."

Autumn padded alongside Wild Wind. Emberstorm was throwing questions at Eclipse about Spark, who answered them quickly.

"I trust her." Wild Wind mewed again.

"I know. And I'm glad that we're alive." Autumn nuzzled Wild Wind.

"We're here!" Eclipse called.

Autumn raced to the front and her jaw fell open.

Standing before them was a large crack in the land. As she peered down into the crack, she heard joyful purrs and she could see distant shapes of cats eating and enjoying life.

Autumn knew it was home.

Autumn's Promise - Chapter 2

Eclipse padded up to a hole in the ground and slipped into it. "It's perfectly safe. Trust me."

Autumn leapt in first. The dirt brushed against her fur as she crawled through the tunnel. Her belly fur was soon covered in dirt, but she was too excited to care.

A proper home. A proper family.

She emerged at the bottom of the crack in the land and she gasped in wonder. On the right side of the cliff was a den shaped hole. Autumn spotted a brown tabby tom sleeping in it and a yellow tom resting just outside it. Beside it was another den shaped hole. There was a dusty red she-cat in this one as well as a white she-cat.

On the left side of the cliff there was another den. In this one, there were only two nests. A pale yellow she-cat rested in one of them. On the ground, there was a den built out of leaves, twigs and vines. A light brown she-cat with green eyes stood over a sleek brown kit as he played with some pebbles.

"Wow." Wild Wind breathed, having emerged from the tunnel.

"Eclipse!" A ginger tom bounded over to her, his yellow eyes surveying the kits. "I didn't know you had kits!"

"I-uh," Eclipse stammered. "They're not mine. But I'm adopting them."

"Alright. They will need a test, considering they're not yours." The tom mewed gravely.

"I was aware of that," Eclipse snapped. "Go on, test them!"

Autumn backed away from the ginger tom, worried he'd fight them. He let out a purr.

"Hello, kits. My name is Sun. I'm the leader of the group of cats that live here. You're just going to have to take a test, ok? Then you can join us and have fun before you have to start working." The tom mewed gently.

"Okay. I'll ace anything you throw my way." Emberstorm puffed out his chest.

Wild Wind rolled his eyes before nodding.

Autumn glared at the tom before dipping her head.

"Come with me, kits. We will go to my den." Sun led them to the den with two nests. "This is my den. I share it with my deputy and mate, Sand."

The pale yellow she-cat waved her tail before stepping out of the nest, stretching gracefully. "I'll take care of the Dynasty."

Sand left them alone and Sun stared at the three kits. "Who'd like to go first?"

"I'll go. I'll pass anyway." Emberstorm mewed arrogantly.

"Alright. Now," Sun peered at him. "What's your name?"

"Emberstorm."

"How old are you?"

"Um, I think it was four and a half moons?"

"How would you describe yourself?"

"Arrogant. Charming. Humorous. Brave."

"Are you better suited for fighting or hunting?"

"I dunno. Never done either."

It went on and on until Sun asked the final question. "Okay, Emberstorm. If staying in the Dynasty is dangerous for some reason, do you stay or you leave?"

"Well, it depends if I'm allowed to leave."

"Very well. Fight me." Sun ordered.

"W-What?" Emberstorm stuttered.

"Fight me."

A little hesitantly, he leapt at Sun. The older tom easily dodged. "Okay. Drop into a hunting crouch."

"What's that?"

"Just try."

Emberstorm dropped onto the moss and tried to crouch but fell over.

"Good. Truth! Look down on this cat. Tell me what to do!" Sun yowled to the sky.

Autumn tilted her head, confused. Suddenly, a white light shone onto Emberstorm. Blinded, the ginger tabby tom flinched.

"Emberstorm, you may stay in the Dynasty. You will be a guard. When you are twelve moons of age, you must guard the Dynasty, even with your life. Who's next?" Sun asked casually.

Wild Wind went next, and he too, was granted permission to stay after being asked to fight Sun and talk about the differences in prey.

"Hmm, Wild Wind. You are very clever. You would be wasting on hunting though. You will be a guard. You must help out at the age of twelve moons and I believe you will be very helpful making tactics to fight foxes, badgers, snakes or eagles." Sun mused. "Autumn!"

"I'm ready." Autumn shivered.

"How are you feeling about your mother disappearing?"

"Betrayed. I didn't think that she'd leave us. But she was always

acting weirdly, as if something was talking to her."

"Hmm. Do you know anything about Truth?"

"Nothing other than he can make white light."

About five questions later, Sun finished. "Very well. Fight me."

Autumn knew better than to question the old tom. She swiped a claw to his right. He blocked it.

Desperate to prove herself and become a guard like her littermates, Autumn feinted to his left but attacked to the right.

It was clear Sun hadn't been expecting it as her claws hit its mark and swiped his right flank. They left a thin trail of blood and Autumn leapt backwards, shocked. "I'm so sorry!"

Sun lifted himself up. "Hmm. Hunting crouch?"

I need to be a guard, like my brothers. I can't be separate from them.

Autumn tried her best to drop into an abysmal crouch, yet her legs bended perfectly. Stunned, she stood up.

"Truth! Show me the way!"

A white light shone on Autumn, then a black light. Then, a white light. Then, a black light.

The black light stayed.

"Autumn, you will be a hunter. From the age of twelve moons, you must hunt for the Dynasty or leave." Sun purred.

A hunter?

"Autumn, stay in here. Wild Wind and Emberstorm, come with me. I shall take you on a tour." Sun led her brothers out while she sat there in shock.

Eclipse padded in. "Hey!"

"Hi."

"How was the test, Autumn?" Eclipse purred excitedly. "I heard you became a hunter."

"Yeah. Great."

"What's wrong?" Eclipse mewed.

"I want to be with my brothers!" The words burst out of her.

"Hey, shh. You're only a kit. You'll see your brothers all the time! You'll be sleeping together; you'll be likely training together half the time..." Eclipse trailed off. "But at the age of twelve moons, that's when you're not a kit anymore. You become a full-grown cat. Then, you'll sleep in the hunters' den."

"What's that?"

"Hasn't Sun told you anything?" Eclipse hissed. "Fine! I'll show you!"

Autumn followed Eclipse out of Sun's den and into the bright sunlight of the crack in the ground.

"That den is Sun and Sand's den. Its for the deputy and leader, although they're mates." Eclipse flicked her tail at it.

"The only proper den is the nursery. You'll be staying there. It's a place for queens and kits." She explained. "The two dens on the right wall are the hunters and guards' dens."

"Don't forget my den!" a blue-gray tom with a white-tipped tail purred from where he had been sitting.

"Right! That's Storm, our healer. He sleeps in the den next to Sun's. See? It's a bit hidden because it's always in the shadows."

Now that Autumn looked, she could see a hole beside Sun and Sand's den. "Okay. So, how does things work here?"

"Well, we worship Truth. He's a god. He sends us signs and messages." Eclipse began. "If a cat wishes to join, they must take the

test. If they fail, they can't stay. Otherwise, they can stay one moon before having to take a test. If you lie here, you are exiled."

"Deputies can oversee tests, although the medicine cat can as well. We take the protection of our kits very seriously. There are always at least two guards guarding the entrance of the nursery. They usually switch the night and day shifts."

"Why two?" Autumn questioned.

"In the Dynasty, we do everything in partners. When hunting, I usually hunt with a partner. And you're not allowed to guard without a partner." She padded back to Sun's den, having finished the tour. "Anything else?"

"No, thanks, Eclipse." Autumn sighed, curling up into a ball.

Autumn's Promise - Chapter 3

Three moons later...

Snow crunched under Autumn's paws as she padded through the woods above the crack in the ground, Snow at her side. Or, the ravine.

It was leaf-bare and greencough was raging through the camp. Half the cats in the Dynasty had it, including Emberstorm. Storm was extremely busy trying to save every cat's life, as he had Sand, Cloud, Emberstorm, Flash, Sparrow, Ash, Sky and Oak in the healer's den, suffering from greencough.

Autumn was extremely worried for Emberstorm, who had caught a cough similar to greencough when he was less than a few moons old. While she and Wild Wind were still considered kits in the eyes of the Dynasty, they were working hard as their respective roles of hunter and guard. Autumn was up at dawn every day to hunt with Snow while Wild Wind would always be seen guarding the ravine.

"Autumn, there's an eagle overhead. I'll have no trouble blending in, I'm worried about you." Snow hissed.

"What's our plan, then?" Autumn mewed.

"I was thinking we lure it to the ground. Then we attack it and kill it." Snow growled.

"Good thinking." Autumn purred. She strode out of the thick trees and let the eagle see her.

Immediately, the eagle circled Autumn and swooped down, its talons outstretched. Fear swept over her even though she knew Snow was nearby to intercept it. No sooner than she had had that thought, her friend leapt onto the eagle, her claws unsheathed.

Autumn joined in, hooking her claws into its body and bringing it down. She finished it off with a quick snap of the neck. Satisfied, she dropped the eagle.

"How will we bring it back to the camp?" Autumn queried.

"You haven't learnt this yet. Most hunters will only learn it at 10 moons of age." Snow explained quickly.

Autumn watched as Snow tapped a rock with her claws unsheathed. They sat around for a bit, exchanging idle conversation, when Fawn led Mountain and Shadow towards them. They eyed the eagle letting out joyful purrs.

Picking it up with their large claws, the guards bore the weight of the eagle together, taking it down into the camp.

"Let's continue hunting, Autumn. We don't want to waste any time." Snow suggested.

"Good idea," Autumn agreed.

In the end, they didn't manage to find much prey, but Autumn caught two rabbits and Snow caught a squirrel and a shrew. They brought their prey into the camp with bright eyes and cheerful flicks of their tail.

Upon entering the camp, Autumn froze. A thick scent of grief hung in the air, clouding up the unmistakeable scent of death.

"Who died?" Snow demanded; worry etched on her face.

"Sand died," Sun sighed, his pelt ungroomed and dull.

"Oh no," Autumn breathed, letting go of her rabbits immediately.

"I must name a new deputy," Sun's eyes flashed with unease. "Truth, listen to me. Sand has passed into your realm, so I declare that Snow will be our new deputy. She may be young but I believe she can serve us to the best of her ability."

Autumn bounded over to where Snow had been sitting neatly and

nuzzled her friend. "Congratulations!"

"Snow! Snow!" the Dynasty cheered for their new deputy.

"Deer, Violet and Cloud, you were the closest to Sand, so you may bury her body." Sun gestured to the lifeless body behind him.

The three she-cats tenderly picked up Sand's body and carried it out of the camp.

"Oak has been talking to me and has decided that he wishes to start helping the Clan. Oak will be joining us as a hunter." Sun announced. "Sky, you must return to your normal duties after you recover from greencough."

Over the next few days, Oak, Sky, Ash and Flash recovered from greencough, so it was only Sparrow, Cloud and Emberstorm in the healer's den with Storm. Autumn was growing increasingly worried for Emberstorm, which she shared with Wild Wind.

"I don't know if he'll make it," Autumn whispered.

"He will. He's our brother. Emberstorm is strong," Wild Wind tried to comfort her.

"He's been sick before. And he was only cured by Twolegs!" Autumn hissed.

Wild Wind was silent.

"Help!"

The call came from Storm, whose green eyes were dull with exhaustion and his pelt was matted. "I can't keep hold of Cloud anymore!"

Cloud staggered out of the healer's den, looking gaunt and like a skeleton. "Don't...bother," the deaf she-cat rasped. "It's too late...anyway."

The white she-cat collapsed on the ground, the sweet and sickly stench of death beginning to rise from her body. Beside her, Storm

looked on, horrified. Snow immediately rushed to his side, taking him into a secluded corner of the camp.

Autumn followed silently, knowing what she was doing was wrong, but desperate to help anyway.

"Shh, you'll be fine, Storm," Snow licked his ears.

"You know we can't be...together, Snow. Stop doing this to me! I love my job as a healer-" Storm broke off to cough slightly.

"Storm, are you okay?" Snow eyed the blue-gray tom in concern.

"Nothing, I'm fine." Storm waved her away.

"You haven't caught greencough, have you?" Snow mewed shrewdly.

Storm opened his mouth to answer before coughing heavily. "I think you might be right."

Autumn ran away from her hiding spot and into the nursery, panting heavily. What had she just witnessed?

Snow and Storm have feelings for each other.

Storm might have caught greencough.

Her head snapped up as she heard more coughing from a new source. Autumn's blood chilled as she realized Snow was coughing, as was Sun.

Leaf-bare was not done with them just yet.

One moon later...

Leaf-bare was just about finished, yet the sick cats weren't healed yet. That was mainly due to Storm being sick himself. It was confirmed; Storm had caught greencough off Emberstorm and Sparrow, and he had given it to Snow, who had then given it to Sun. All five of them resided in the healer's den.

Autumn sat around idly, unable to go hunt due to Snow being confined to camp. A thought struck her suddenly. Now that Snow was deputy, she wouldn't be Autumn's partner anymore. She would be *Sun's*.

The chatter inside the camp came to a halt, and Autumn turned slowly around towards the healer's den, afraid of what she would see.

It was the worst.

Two bodies were hauled out of the den, one of them being Snow's, and the other being Emberstorm's. Autumn's breath caught in her throat and she fell to the ground, her paws being chilled by the snow. Struggling to breathe, darkness overtook her.

Autumn opened her eyes, blinking against the bright sunlight. She took a moment to observe where she was. Autumn was lying in the medicine den. Storm was bending over her, Wild Wind hovering anxiously at the entrance of the den.

Autumn struggled to recount what had happened for her to end up here, and for a second, she couldn't remember anything. Then, it hit her. She had seen Emberstorm's body, lifeless and still.

"Emberstorm?" she let out a pained mew, her voice trembling.

"He's gone," Storm's green eyes were filled with worry and fear.

"No!" Autumn yowled, trying to lift herself from the nest. Upon standing up, her legs buckled underneath her, and she fell back into the feathers and ferns of the nest.

"Please...Wild Wind, tell me it's a joke," Autumn addressed her brother, her body twitching uncontrollably.

"It's not a joke," Wild Wind sighed, dipping his head before coming to her. He nuzzled her, trying to help her.

"Go away!" Autumn lashed out with her claws, feeling satisfaction as she let the anger replace the grief.

Wild Wind staggered back; his pelt marked with a single wound. Blood dripped from it as he stared at her in shock.

"Leave me alone!" Autumn roared, reaching out with her muzzle to bite, to claw him, to hurt and to harm.

Wild Wind cast a fleeting look at her, his brown tabby pelt bristling with shock. "A-Alright, then." He backed out of the den, the tip of his tail twitching.

Autumn realized that Wild Wind was *scared* of her.

Slowly, Autumn padded out of the den. Stretching, she viewed the scene in front of her. Snow and Emberstorm's bodies lay in the middle of the camp, arranged as though they were sleeping. Autumn let out a pained yowl, rushing to Emberstorm's body to thrust her muzzle into his thick fur.

He was the one that protected us.

Beside Snow's body, Wild Wind hovered around her anxiously, as though unsure if it were safe to come.

He better not.

"Emberstorm! Why did you have to leave!? I miss you!" Autumn raised her voice to the night sky.

"All cats gather here, please!" Sun yowled from just outside his den.

Autumn plodded towards him, her head drooping and her spirit low.

"I have decided on the new deputy." Sun announced. "When I announce my choice, please let me explain."

It's probably Wild Wind. Stupid furball.

"The new deputy for the Dynasty of Truth shall be Autumn!"

Immediately, the cats began to protest.

"She's still a kit!" Talon argued.

"She joined like three moons ago! How can we trust her?" Mountain added.

Sun's fur spiked up in annoyance. "I trust her. That is all you need to know."

Ayy, this is about 500 more words than my usual, dunno how I managed □😬

Autumn's Promise - Chapter 4

Autumn held her head high for the first time since Emberstorm's death. Along with her brother, Sparrow had also passed away, and Sun's strength had been affected greatly.

"Autumn, can Flash and I go hunting?" Oak approached her.

"I don't care!" Autumn snapped. "If you want to go, then go! Why ask me?"

"I'm sorry, Autumn," Oak stammered. "It's just that Sand and Snow always-"

"Do I look like Sand or Snow?" Autumn sneered. "No. I'm not."

Emberstorm's death had been taking its toll on Autumn. Despite becoming deputy, she was always unhappy. Her dreams were haunted with Emberstorm's dead body becoming alive. Autumn would always rush to him, desperate to hear his voice again, when he would fall down, the light in his eyes dying.

Afraid to sleep due to the nightmares, Autumn had kept herself awake most of the nights. This resulted in her becoming unfocused and grouchy.

"Autumn, I want to talk to you," a voice called.

Autumn almost lashed out again, but she realized it was Sun. *I wouldn't have lashed out if it was Emberstorm either,* she reminded herself. She managed as much respect as she could and curtly nodded. "Alright. Let's go to our den."

Sun dipped his head, his yellow eyes dull and sparking with worry as he led the way to their den.

"Well?" Autumn whirled around once they got there, turning to face the ginger tom. *His fur is the same shade as Emberstorm's*. "What do you want?"

"I've been receiving many complaints," Sun started. Autumn noticed that his fur was patchy and unkempt. *Now, that's not like Emberstorm. He used to always keep his fur pristine.*

"I don't care. I'm the deputy, I order them around," Autumn spat. *But there should be a few more cats to order around.*

"But Autumn, unless you can change your attitude a bit, I have to demote you," Sun sighed. "I had such high hopes for you..."

"Wait why? Why do you have to demote me?" Autumn hissed, rage filling her from ear tips to tail tip.

"Because I'm weak. Greencough never really left my body, and Storm cannot heal me." Sun explained patiently.

Wait. I get to lead if he dies. Sun doesn't deserve to live while Emberstorm had to die.

"That means I'll lead when you die." Autumn said bluntly. "And you don't want that."

Sun winced. "Yes, that's correct. It's not that I don't want it."

"Well fine!" Autumn swept her tail across the floor furiously. "Demote me!"

"Autumn, I'll give you a moon to decide." Sun mewed sternly.

Autumn glared at her leader before storming out of the den.

Pacing in annoyance in the sunlight, Autumn thought about what she had let herself become lately. It was true, her lack of sleep had changed her in a way that she didn't really want. And she had hurt Wild Wind...

If Emberstorm was there, he would've stopped me. If Emberstorm was there, it wouldn't have happened.

Guilt pierced her as she noticed she hadn't talked to Wild Wind since Emberstorm's death.

"Sun! Autumn!"

Autumn turned to see Fawn, Violet, Mountain and Sky marching a black tom with dark green eyes into the camp. Those green eyes look like Emberstorm's.

"What is it?" Autumn purred, trying to be kind but miserably failing.

Fawn eyed her with distrust and spoke to Sun, who had appeared behind her. "Sun, this tom wants to join us. His name is Night Sky."

"Hmm," Sun pondered the thought. "Very well. We are low on cats after all. Night Sky, come with me and Autumn to our den."

Autumn obeyed with a sharp glare to the stranger before following them to her den.

"Autumn, I want you to help with Night Sky's test," Sun declared.

"What? Me?" Autumn puffed out her chest. "Alright."

Sun dipped his head before leaving the den.

"What's your name?" Autumn questioned.

"Don't you know that?" Night Sky asked in confusion.

"Answer!" Autumn snapped, losing control for a brief moment and her claws unsheathed out of instinct.

"Night Sky," he stammered.

"How old are you?"

"9 moons," Night Sky answered quickly, afraid that she'd lose control again.

"Show me your best crouch," Autumn ordered.

Night Sky dropped into a crouch and pounced on a stick, snapping it in two gracefully.

Not bad. I haven't seen any cat under 12 moons do that before.

Autumn then observed his battle crouch. It was decent, though not as good as the hunting crouch.

"Fight me now." Autumn commanded.

Night Sky blinked at her before launching himself at her, his claws glinting in in the afternoon sun. Shocked, Autumn took a step back, unsheathing her claws as well. Night Sky swiped a paw over her flank, leaving bleeding claw marks. Angered, Autumn dived at him, clawing his ears and thrusting her muzzle towards his neck.

Night Sky spun around, knocking Autumn off. Surprised, she let down her guard for a quick second to take a breath. During that second, Night Sky used his weight to his advantage, knocking Autumn to the ground, exposing her belly. Autumn quickly rolled over so his claws scraped her back. She then kicked him in his belly, winding him. Already, she could feel herself tiring. She had to end it.

Before she could act, Night Sky was already on his feet, a wary look in his eyes. Autumn bled from several wounds while Night Sky's only injury were his clawed ears. His black fur suddenly shot towards her and his jaws snapped near her neck, grazing it.

"Good job," Autumn grunted, throwing him off. "Though I didn't expect you to have your claws out."

"Sorry," Night Sky meowed. "I've never fought with sheathed claws before. It was instinct."

Autumn inspected her wounds, feeling prickles of pain as blood trickled out. Shaking herself, she nodded at Night Sky. "Truth! Show me the way!" she yowled.

A white light flashed on Night Sky, respecting his fighting skills. Then, it switched to black. Quite like Autumn's test, it was as if Truth couldn't decide. Then, Truth decided on black.

Hunter.

"Congratulations," Autumn mewed with no emotion, feeling herself slip back into her silent and cold personality. "You're a hunter. Talk

to someone else about the rules."

Autumn swept out of the den, wondering why she had let down her guard in the first place. *Night Sky is an arrogant furball,* she thought angrily.

Her wounds had begun to throb, so she headed to the medicine den. Shivering as she entered, her recent memories of this den took over. Autumn leaned on the den wall, feeling sick as she recalled how she had woken up here after finding out Emberstorm had died.

Emberstorm...How did I forget you? Ever since your death, I have constantly been thinking about you. How did I forget during the test?

Autumn's Promise - Chapter 5

Autumn lashed her tail, her fur fluffing out as Night Sky padded around the camp as if he owned it all. *Emberstorm used to do that...*

Stupid furball.

She watched through slitted eyes as the black tom strode up to the prey pile. He mused around it for a while, upturning a sparrow and a rabbit. Then, Night Sky selected a juicy crow, one that Deer, a very skilled hunter, had brought in.

Autumn let out a hiss as she realized that Night Sky hadn't hunted at all that day. She sprang towards him, her claws unsheathed automatically as she glared at him, furious that she was smaller than him.

"Why are you eating without hunting?" she growled.

"Well," Night Sky sat back on his haunches, dropping the crow. "I needed my strength to hunt."

"But-" Autumn protested before she cut herself off, aware that she sounded like a kit. "Fine. But make sure you contribute next time before you eat."

Nigh Sky raised his gaze to hers defiantly before dropping it. "Fine, Autumn."

Satisfied, Autumn padded back to her favorite rock. She perched on it once more, her eyes tracking Night Sky as he left the camp, his crow back on the pile. *Good.*

Autumn kept her eyes trained on the tunnel that led out of the camp until sunset, yet Night Sky still had not returned. She had been watching the black tom all day.

I'm not obsessed with him, she told herself firmly. *I'm just suspicious of*

him. He just joined so easily. I'm not *obsessed.*

That night, Autumn fell into a deep slumber immediately. When she opened her eyes, she found herself in a dream. She was in her camp. It was sunhigh and Night Sky was walking towards her. Autumn willed her dream self to snap at him and walk away but instead, her dream self didn't move. Instead, she sat still, flicking her tail idly.

Night Sky sat down beside her, and they talked. Autumn strained to hear but it felt like the voices were faded. Suddenly, Night Sky sprang up, bristling and stalked away. Autumn watched her dream self sit there with her ears drooped.

Suddenly, Autumn's dream self sniffed the air, her eyes and ears alert. A red-orange stuff moved through the camp and Autumn realized it was fire. Autumn struggled to run with her dream self but she was washed away in the fire just in time to save her dream self.

The dream changed and Autumn saw Sun's body, charred with burns. Autumn's dream self laid by the tom.

What?!

Autumn woke up with a start, still panicking. She spun around to check on Sun, after all, hadn't he said for himself that he was weak and dying soon? She let out a breath of relief as the tom slept soundly.

I wish I could say the same for myself.

Knowing she was unable to sleep, Autumn left her den, sitting in the moonlight.

Storm sometimes gets dreams about events that will occur. Is that true?

Autumn paced the clearing, wearing tracks in the soft earth. *What would Emberstorm do?*

He would talk to Wild Wind. He's the cleverest out of all of us.

"Alright," she sighed, talking to no one. "I'll talk to Wild Wind."

Autumn found herself slumped where she had fallen asleep, her fur chilled by the early morning frost. She kept her eyes on Wild Wind's den until her brother came out.

"Wild Wind!" she called nervously.

The brown tabby turned towards her, curiosity and something else in his amber eyes. Autumn shivered as she realized he was scared of *her*.

"What is it?" he mumbled, coming to stand in front of her, his eyes darting around nervously.

He's scared I'll hurt him again...

"I'm so sorry!" Autumn mewed desperately. "I didn't mean to hurt you! I was just so angry, I wanted someone to blame!"

Wild Wind blinked at her gratefully. "I forgive you. I'm sorry too. I wasn't there for you."

Autumn dipped her head. *Okay. Now what would Emberstorm say?*

"I need your help, Wild Wind." Autumn blurted.

Wild Wind tilted his head to one side. "I don't know any deputy duties," he mewed with a shrug.

"No. It's something else. Something more serious." Worry made Autumn curt and she twitched her ears, waiting for his reply.

"Alright. Shall we discuss it out of camp?" Wild Wind meowed in agreement.

"Yes, just hold on. I need to do my duties first. I'll meet you here at sunhigh." Autumn decided.

Sunhigh. That was when the fire was in my dream. Perhaps I should talk to Storm too.

Autumn headed to her rock where she assigned Fawn, Mountain and Ripple to one guard patrol and Violet, Shadow and Sky to another.

"Fawn, your patrol will head out now," she ordered. "Violet, you will take your patrol out at sunhigh."

Both she-cats dipped their heads.

Sunhigh came and Autumn met up with her brother at sunhigh. They left the camp through the tunnel.

"I'm really worried," Autumn mewed once they were in a safe place. "I had a dream last night. I dreamt that the Dynasty was burnt during a fire and that Sun died."

She didn't include the part about Night Sky and her's argument.

"Autumn, I'm sure it's just a dream. You're worried. That's fine." Wild Wind mewed consolingly.

Autumn snarled in frustration. "What would I be worried about then?" she snapped.

"Night Sky joining?" Wild Wind suggested.

"Whatever," Autumn growled. She stomped away from him, secretly glad that they had fixed their relationship.

Siblings are important. I just wish Emberstorm was here.

Autumn gazed over her camp, feeling the sun warm her pelt. Her sharp eyes immediately caught Night Sky's black pelt, after all, there were only a few cats in the Dynasty who had dark pelts. Night Sky had just returned to the camp, a skinny mouse dangling from his mouth.

That's all? Autumn let out a hiss, feeling annoyed with his lack of contribution. *I won't confront him now. It's barely past sunhigh. What if this is the sunhigh from my dream?*

Emberstorm, what would you do?

Autumn knew with a sinking feeling that she knew what the tom would do. He would talk to Storm. *I better talk to him, then.*

Finally tearing her gaze from Night Sky, she turned to the healer's den. To her disappointment, the blue-gray tom wasn't in his den. Growling in frustration, she left the den briskly, glancing up at the sun.

Good. Sunhigh is over.

Autumn let her guard down for the first time that day, happy that the fire wasn't today. Letting out a deep purr of happiness, she chose a mouse from the prey pile.

As she sat outside her den, her tail flicking as she chewed the meat of the mouse, she heard pawsteps coming towards her. Looking up, she recognized Sun's pelt.

"What is it?" she sprang up, her fur bristling as she wondered if it was to do with her dream.

"I've been noticing that you seem very...occupied with Night Sky. You haven't taken your eyes off him, every time I see you, you're looking at him. Now, I just wanted to tell you that deputies aren't allowed to have kits." Sun mewed seriously.

What? Is Sun suggesting I want to have kits with Night Sky?

Annoyance sparked inside her and she snapped at the tom. "I'm not in love with him! By the spirit of Truth, he's new!"

Sun shot her a knowing look, his eyes filled with amusement. "Alright."

I'm not in love with him.

Am I?

Autumn shuddered as she realized that Sun's words were true.

Oooooh! Autumn's apparently in love with Night Sky, and what is this vision? Will the vision come true? Will Night Sky and

Autumn have kits???

Autumn's Promise - Chapter 6

Autumn stood in shock as thoughts circled around her head.

I'm in love with Night Sky.

That's *why I'm obsessing over him*

Oh, Truth. What happened to me?

Autumn paced the den, kicking up moss in her frustration. *I can't be in love with Night Sky. I can't be in love with him. I hate him! I've been trying to ignore him for days already!*

But I wouldn't have spent that much time on any other cat.

Autumn let out a low growl; she didn't want to ponder on this anymore. Shaking her fur out, she padded out of the den. *I have duties.*

"Autumn!"

A call to her name made her head snap back towards it. To her surprise, it was Deer.

"What?" Autumn replied.

"I was wondering if you wanted to come hunting with me," Deer dipped her head.

Autumn tilted her head in confusion. *Deer and I have never really been friends.*

"Sure?" Autumn kept her tone mild, but she knew her eyes were glittering with distrust.

Deer led the way out of the camp, Autumn following a few pawsteps behind her.

They padded through the woods lightly, sniffing for prey. Deer flicked her tail and Autumn spotted a fat mouse scrabbling for food at the bottom of a tree.

Got it, thanks. I can hunt, you know.

Autumn tried not to let her sleep-deprived self make a fool of herself, after all, Deer was a very respectable cat. As she watched, Deer pounced at the mouse, driving it towards Autumn.

Autumn moved towards it, but her movements were too slow, and her paws were to clumsy. Through tired eyes, she saw the mouse scurry away.

"Sorry," Autumn mewed, afraid that Deer would be mad at them.

Deer blinked at her through sympathetic and sharp eyes. "Do you feel slow lately?"

Autumn flicked her ears in irritation. "I'm not slow!"

Deer slapped her tail on Autumn's mouth, letting out a sharp hiss. "I smell fox-scent."

A fox.

Autumn perked up, eager to help her Clan. However, she became disappointed after Deer mewed, "The guards will deal with this."

"We won't get to help?" Autumn flared in anger. "I want to help!"

"You're a hunter, Autumn. Just because you're deputy doesn't mean you can do a guard's job," Deer mewed softly.

"I can fight!" Autumn protested. "I was almost made a guard!"

"But you weren't, Autumn." Deer's mew was stern. "Go back to camp and get some guards. I'll start with the patrol right now."

Autumn watched, giving up as Deer tapped her paw on the ground. Violet and Sky melted out of the forest, their expressions turning to shock as they smelt the fox.

"Go, Autumn!" Deer ordered, turning to help the guards.

Why can she help? Autumn snorted but listened to Deer and raced back to camp.

On the way back, Autumn felt insanely tired and her paws felt like they were dropping off, but she kept on going. She burst into the camp and ran into the guard's den. "Fox!" she alerted them, out of breath.

Autumn collapsed on the den floor, panting hard. Absolutely exhausted, she closed her eyes and dropped off into sleep.

Images flashed before her eyes as she dreamed. Images of a burning camp and a fire engulfing it. Images of Night Sky and her arguing.

Autumn woke up to see Storm leaned over her, his eyes worried. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine, I'm fine," Autumn snapped, struggling to stand up.

"Deer saved you a squirrel," Storm mewed, before adding, "the prey pile was empty."

"Why would Deer save me a squirrel?" Autumn snarled, lashing her tail weakly.

Storm shrugged and dropped the furry creature at her paws. "Eat. You'll feel better."

Reluctantly, Autumn took a small bite of the squirrel. She chewed it slowly, swallowing it quickly. Suddenly, an uneasy feeling came over her and she felt disgusted and gagged, choking on the squirrel. Storm widened his eyes as she vomited the squirrel onto the moss.

Autumn coughed, clearing the squirrel from her throat. She pawed the squirrel before pushing it away. "No thanks, I don't feel too well."

Storm eyed her in concern, his eyes narrowing in suspicion. "Lately, have you been close to any toms?"

"No! Why would I be close to any toms?" Autumn hissed.

"You're always watching Night Sky," Storm mewed observantly.

"I'm not!" Autumn bristled, in shock.

Did the whole Clan know about her feelings?

"Admit it," Storm growled, his ears flat on his head. "You're in love with Night Sky."

"Fine," Autumn stood up shakily from her nest. "And why do you ask?"

"Because," Storm sighed. "I think you're pregnant."

That can't be true. I won't let it be true.

Autumn stood up shakily from the nest and paused at the entrance of the den.

As she left, she was aware of Storm's green eyes piercing her.

"Autumn! Are you okay?"

A voice shook her from her daze, and she gazed weakly at Night Sky. Annoyance flashed through her, but she didn't have enough energy to snap at him. "I'm fine," she managed.

"Autumn! I expect you to stay in your den to rest!" Sun called to her from the den.

"No! I'm perfectly fine!" Autumn hissed. "I can hunt!"

"Stay in your den! And that's an order!" Sun snapped before returning to his den.

"Shh," Night Sky interrupted her feeble protest. "I'll get you out, I promise."

Autumn looked into his dark green eyes. They were filled with warmth and the sun reflected spirals in them. "Okay," she grunted, padding to her den.

Autumn lay in her nest, regretting her decision to trust Night Sky. It was past sunset and the tom still hadn't shown up. Then, a hiss made her jump to her paws.

"Autumn! I've made a small hole in the back of the den. It's hidden, so come towards my voice. Sun will never find it!"

Joy raced through her and her pelt bushed out as she eyed the back of the den. Its stone walls gave her a sense of claustrophobia before she spotted a patch of stone that was darker than the rest of the wall.

She squeezed through the dark hole to find herself blinded. It opened up to a larger tunnel that was extremely dark. Immediately, she panicked and tried to leave but she couldn't find the exit again. "Help!" she yowled, terrified of the cave walls pressing on her.

Then, dark green eyes blinked at her in the darkness. "Quiet!" Night Sky hissed. "Follow me."

Calming down, Autumn crept through the tunnel and followed Night Sky through the dark tunnel. The smooth cave walls felt weird on her paws and they ached soon as they continued.

Soon, light began to show, and the tunnel curved upwards. Night Sky emerged from the tunnel first. Autumn squeezed through the small exit to find herself in a hollow tree. The tree had an uneven chunk of wood scraped off with claws; Night Sky's, Autumn presumed.

Autumn emerged to find herself on a cliff side, overlooking a salty patch of water. It was endless, the water rushed and slapped against the cliff. She viewed the sunset happily.

This is freedom.

"You did it," Autumn turned to face Night Sky.

"I promised I would," Night Sky replied.

"Thank you so much."

"I would do anything for you, Autumn. I love you," Night Sky whispered. "But you don't want me. I've seen the looks you shoot me. You hate me, don't you? Don't answer. I don't want it to be true."

Autumn flinched back as their pelts brushed. "Night Sky..."

"I should go. Use the tunnel to go back to the den," Night Sky backed away hurriedly, downcast. He was almost to the tree-tunnel when Autumn called out.

"Wait!"

Autumn hurried to his side, her whiskers twitching in tension. "Night Sky, I love you too. I didn't realize it at first, but then I found myself always thinking about you. I was always watching you. And I believe that I feel the same."

Night Sky's pelt radiated shock. "Are you sure? Are you just being nice?"

"I'm sure, Night Sky. I love you."

Autumn's Promise - Chapter 7

Autumn stood still, barely moving as Night Sky moved closer to her. Carefully, he licked her ears and she fell against him.

"I can't believe it," he kept muttering. "I can't believe it."

"Night Sky," Autumn whispered. "I'm pregnant with kits, too."

Night Sky drew in a sharp breath of air. "Mine?"

Autumn dipped her head.

"I can't believe it. I'm going to be a father to the best mate ever," Night Sky purred.

"We should go back to the camp," Autumn suggested quietly.

"I agree." Night Sky inclined his head and they padded side by side through the secret tunnel. This time, the walk didn't seem long, rather, Autumn was sad to see light again.

The night ended and Autumn was left alone in her nest, wishing she had realized what Night Sky meant for her earlier.

Sunrise came and Autumn was up immediately, bouncing out of her nest, excitement radiating in every strand of fur. Sun noticed her energy suspiciously but saying nothing.

Autumn lolled around the camp for the morning before deciding to find something to do. Perhaps Night Sky was finished from the morning patrol he had been sent on?

It was sunhigh before Night Sky finally padded into camp. Autumn lit up but she forced herself to stay calm.

You're not a kit. Calm down!

Autumn flicked her tail idly as she eagerly watched Night Sky drop

a young falcon on the prey pile before his eyes met hers.

Night Sky let out a purr and sat down next to her. They shared tongues in the camp, gazing into each other's eyes.

Night Sky opened his mouth to speak, pausing from his licking. "When you have the kits, what should we name them?"

Autumn purred; her tail curled around Night Sky. "If we have a tom, I want to name him after both my brothers. Stormwind."

"I love that name," Night Sky agreed immediately. "I was thinking perhaps if we have a she-cat, we could name her after my mother. She was a wonderful cat and her name was Moonlight."

"I would love that," Autumn purred again.

"I'm not sure I'm ready to be a father though," Night Sky continued, his eyes trained on the floor.

"Why not? It's too late to say no now," Autumn protested.

"I don't want to have so many responsibilities," Night Sky sighed. "We're just so young. What are you, barely twelve moons old?"

"I might be less than twelve moons," Autumn snapped. "But I didn't ask to be expecting! It just happened!"

Night Sky leapt to his feet, bristling. Autumn had a sense of uncertainty and she stood up too.

"Look, Autumn. I'm not ready to be a father. I'm afraid you'll have to raise the kits on your own," the black tom mewed, his expression cold.

Autumn's jaw dropped and she watched silently as he stalked away.

He stalked away...

My dream!

Autumn let out a cry of fear and spun around, trying to find Sun.

The leader wasn't anywhere in camp. She took a cautious sniff of the air and realized she could smell smoke already.

"Leave the camp!" she raised her voice to a yowl. "Fire!"

There weren't many cats in camp, just Autumn, Night Sky, Shadow, Fawn, Eclipse and Flash. Worry flashed through her for Night Sky and Eclipse in particular. Despite her argument with her mate, she still loved him.

Fawn reacted quickest, nudging Shadow to his feet and running out of the camp, Flash a few pawsteps behind them. Night Sky was slow to respond and hurried to the camp entrance without a second glance at Autumn. Pain clawed her as she turned to survey the camp.

I might never see it again.

"Eclipse! Let's go!" Autumn caterwauled.

The black she-cat ran over her, the smoke getting thicker and little flickers of fire dancing in the camp.

Autumn led the way cautiously through the camp but once they reached the tunnel, she recoiled. It was black and burnt, and as she touched the soft dirt on the stones, it was burning hot. She winced and took a few pawsteps back. "We can't go through!"

Eclipse paced in a circle, the fire spreading closer and closer. "Autumn, goodbye. I'm afraid this is the end."

"No! Eclipse! You saved our lives!" Autumn howled, nudging the she-cat to her paws. "There's another exit!"

"Where?" Eclipse's eyes were filled with trust and hope.

"Let's just go! Follow me, and don't be afraid!" Autumn ran into her den and to her horror, half of it was ablaze and Sun was unconscious, lying on the ground.

Terror ran through her from her ears to tail tip. *Night Sky must have told him about the tunnel, and he must have come back in to try and*

save us.

She had no time to be angry at her mate, she had to save Eclipse and Sun. "Go first, Eclipse!" she ordered.

"No! I'm not leaving!" Eclipse growled, trying to drag Sun towards the back of the den and away from the flames that licked at his fur.

Already, his fur was charred and was blackening.

My dream is coming true.

Lifelessly, Autumn stumbled across to Eclipse and began to help her. With a glitter of sparks, a branch fell down into the ravine, sending the sparks towards the cats. Autumn brought a paw up to her face to protect it from the sparks while Eclipse moaned in agony as the fire came closer.

"We have to leave him!" Autumn commanded, her eyes stinging with pain and grief. "We'll die!"

"No! He's my leader! I have to stay!" Eclipse cried, her teeth digging into Sun's scruff.

But the she-cat was small, small for an average cat, while Sun was a fully grown tom. There was no hope.

"Eclipse, please," Autumn begged. "Come with me!"

"I will not, Autumn. I told you, this is the end of me. You go ahead," Eclipse mewed in a soft voice.

Autumn bit back her whimpers of pain as the fire crept closer and closer. Sun's body was half hidden in the towering flames. Eclipse winced in pain and hobbled over to where Autumn stood, frozen in horror and shock. "Go!"

Autumn nodded dimly and clambered through the tunnel, desperate to outrun the flames. Bitterness swept through her as she remembered the last time she had gone through this tunnel; Night Sky had been with her.

They had still been perfect.

Two sunrises later, Autumn padded down the tunnel to her old den, Wild Wind behind her. She paused at the exit. "I don't know what I'll find," she mewed softly, her body shivering.

Wild Wind pressed against her and they walked out together.

The scene that met them was devastating. The walls of the den were fine, being stone, but the moss was all charred and burnt. Two bodies lay in a corner of the den; Sun's and Eclipses.

Autumn let out a choked whimper of pain and lay down in between Sun's body and Eclipse's. "I'm sorry..." she whispered. "I'm so sorry..."

Wild Wind let out a yelp of surprise as Sun stirred, his eyes blinking open.

"Sun!" Autumn took a pace back in her surprise. "You're alive!"

"I'll go get Storm," Wild Wind offered immediately.

"No, Wild Wind," Sun let out a harsh hiss. "It's too late."

"What about Eclipse," Autumn trembled. "Is she...?"

"She's gone," Sun sighed. "She saved me from the fire, using her body as a shield. I won't ever be able to repay her."

Sun broke off into a fit of violent coughs.

"Sun! You need Storm," Autumn mewed, alarmed.

"Don't, Autumn. I can feel Truth calling to me," Sun eyes had dimmed, and his body was barely moving.

"The Dynasty needs you," Autumn argued feebly.

"No, the Dynasty needs you. Autumn, you will be the next leader. I have good faith in you." Sun let the last words die in his mew

before his head fell backwards, his body stiff and the heat leaving rapidly.

Autumn stood up, shaking her pelt. Her green eyes burned with determination, fury and grief. "I promise that from this day onwards, I will do everything in my power to uphold the traditions and laws of the Dynasty. I vow that I will protect the Dynasty with everything I have, even if it takes my life. Nothing will stop me from breaking this promise. Nothing at all."

Autumn's Promise - Chapter 8

One moon had passed since the tragic fire. As well as Sun and Eclipse's lives, the fire had spread further than the ravine. Ash had died due to severe burns. In the aftermath of the fire, the cats had worked hard to fix the camp up, but some places still smelt of smoke, namely Autumn's den.

Violet had moved to the nursery shortly after the fire, much to Flash's delight, who was her mate. She was due to give birth any day, the same as Autumn.

Night Sky and Autumn had talked and decided that they both had matured greatly. They had left their argument behind them and Autumn now resided in the nursery with Violet.

Autumn had chosen Deer as her deputy. The light brown she-cat had been a good friend to her after losing Eclipse. Even now, she still mourned her adopted mother.

Night Sky's scent rushed into her nose and she looked for the tom. He sprang out from behind a bush, purring, a squirrel in his jaws. "Eat," he commanded in a soft voice.

Autumn rolled her eyes but took the squirrel anyways, taking small bites. It tasted dull but she forced herself to eat for her kits. While she ate, she looked around the camp. All the greenery had been removed, but new ferns and leaves would grow. She knew it. As she watched, she noticed Wild Wind staring into space, his head low and his eyes dim. A wave of sympathy swept over her for her brother. Wild Wind had been the closest to Eclipse. He had visited her almost every day while she had been alive.

Night Sky followed her gaze and dipped his head. "I'll talk to him."

Autumn mewed her thanks before heaving her swollen belly inside the nursery, resting on the soft moss.

Suddenly, Violet let out a cry of pain. Autumn leapt up to her paws, regretting it immediately as her belly heaved.

"Storm!" Autumn hollered, sticking her head out of the den. The tom came bounding, some herbs in his mouth.

He felt Violet's belly before nodding sharply. "You're kitting," he purred. "Just relax and lick up these leaves."

Violet obeyed.

"As well," Storm continued. "I'll give you a stick with honey sticking a little catmint to it. Whenever you feel pain, bite on the stick."

"How does the stick help?" Autumn asked curiously.

Storm answered without looking up from Violet where she was groaning. "The catmint automatically soothes cats and when they taste it, cats sometimes experience joy and gain energy. The honey also helps with the yowling, as many kitting queens can be rather loud. The stick muffles most of it though."

To prove his point, Violet let out a loud and painful yowl and Autumn saw a little kit hit the moss of the den. "Autumn! Take this kit and lick it the wrong way to get its blood flowing!" Storm ordered.

Autumn dipped her head, picking up the kit and licking it rapidly. Soon, it began mewling for food.

Before it was sunhigh, Violet had kitted three adorable kits. The first born was a dark brown tabby she-cat, the second a yellow she-cat and the third a brown she-cat. *All she-cats.* Autumn let out a purr of joy, but her worry sparked inside her.

What if I'm not good enough? That looked like it hurt...

Despite her nervousness, Autumn congratulated Violet before retiring to a corner of the den. She stayed there for the rest of the day.

"Eat, Autumn. Please."

Autumn turned away from her mate, burying her head in her paws.

"Autumn, come on, eat," Night Sky urged. "Our kits need you."

A memory of Violet's kitting came to her.

Violet howled in pain, thrashing around on the moss. A plop told Autumn another kit had been born but she refused to watch, instead concentrating on the kit she was licking.

"What's wrong, dear?" Night Sky meowed seriously.

"I'm scared," Autumn whimpered. "It hurt Violet so much..."

Night Sky refused to let anxiety show and instead, he mewed, "Violet and Flash have named them. Do you want to know?"

Autumn nodded slightly.

"Thorn, River and Swift," Night Sky announced happily.

"That's great," she replied flatly.

Night Sky watched her with a hurt expression when a yowl outside caught their attention. Autumn padded out of the nursery to see five-no, six, no, *seven* cats trailing into the camp. Deer was leading them.

"What is this?" Autumn snapped, glaring at the patrol of hunters that had brought them back.

"I'm sorry, Autumn. But these cats are starving. And they want to join us. We're low on numbers since the fire," Deer dipped her head meekly.

A black tom with yellow eyes took a step forward. "My name is Dark, and this is what is left of my Clan. We are broken and dying. Our medicine cat has no herbs. We have no prey. We need help. Please, Autumn, help us. Let us stay with you."

Autumn sighed, turning to Deer again. "I'm sorry I snapped at you, Deer. You're right."

Deer nodded. "Shall I test them?"

"Test?" An orange tabby tom looked alarmed.

"Yes. We are the Dynasty of Truth. If you wish to stay with us, you must answer some questions." Autumn explained carefully.

Dark exchanged a look with a black she-cat. "Alright. We'll take the test. But what happens if we lie?"

"You can't lie," Autumn mewed softly. "Truth will control your spirit and you will be forced to tell the truth."

At this, fear flashed in Dark's eyes. "Uh," he muttered. "Do we have to take the test?"

"Dark!" a ginger and white she-cat snorted. "Don't listen to the dung-brain. Do you really think a cat can control us?"

Dark silenced the she-cat with his tail before turning to Autumn. "Well?"

"No, you can stay one moon without taking the test," Deer jumped in.

"Very well. We will not take the test," Dark mewed.

Autumn dipped her head. "If that is what you wish."

A half moon later, Autumn was shrieking in the nursery. Storm rushed in immediately, Water That Trickles Off Cliff at his side. Water was Dark's medicine cat, and she and Storm had started to work together.

Ruthless, Nightfire and Pounce had become hunters, while Razor, Scar and Dark had become guards. Wild Wind had confided in Autumn that whilst on a patrol, Dark had started a fight with some rogues that had stolen Ruthless' rabbit. They had been heavily injured.

Autumn had given Dark a scolding, as the Dynasty didn't fight. She didn't notice his eyes sparking with aggression.

Night Sky licked her head as a small kit fell onto the nest. Then, the pain ended.

"One kit, Autumn. She's beautiful," Water mewed, her voice sweet like honey.

Autumn sighed in relief. *I have to be ready. No more waiting.*

Autumn took her first glance at her kit and almost fell over. She would have, if she wasn't already sitting. It was beautiful, with black fur, a white underbelly, white paws, white eartips and a white tailtip. The perfect combination between light and dark. Autumn gazed at her for a few more seconds before turning to Night Sky. He too was purring.

"We've discussed this," Night Sky mewed softly. "Moon."

"It's perfect. I couldn't love it more." Autumn sighed in happiness.

A loud yowl broke the moment and Autumn stayed inside the den, unable to move. It seemed that Dark was quarrelling with Deer. Their voices were raised and extremely loud.

"I don't care if you hunted it, Dark!" Deer cried.

"I hunted it; I eat it!" Dark snarled.

"You're not supposed to be hunting anyways! You're a guard, not a hunter! And besides, the Dynasty hunts for all its members! The kits eat *first*!" Deer growled.

Autumn winced and gently resettled herself so she could see through the entrance.

Dark and Deer were face to face, their tails lashing in anger. Beside Dark was a tiny rabbit.

That's not worth fighting over.

"Violet, can you take Moon for a bit?" Autumn eased herself up off the floor, giving Moon to the queen.

She nodded and Autumn left the den.

"Why are you fighting like kits?" Autumn thrusted the two cats apart, her fur bristling.

"I hunted this rabbit and Deer took it!" Dark yowled, his claws unsheathed.

Alarmed, Autumn faced Dark. "I have an announcement!" she called.

The tom's dark eyes betrayed nothing.

"Dark and his friends have stayed with us for a moon. It is time for them to take the test," Autumn decided.

"No!" Dark protested loudly. "We belong here!"

"If you refuse, you must leave," Autumn mewed calmly although she was churning inside.

I should not have let them stay.

"Fine!" Dark stormed off, taking the rabbit with him.

Deer moved immediately to stop him, barring him and his friends' way. "Hold on. That rabbit belongs to us!"

"We can fight over it," Pounce mewed. "I'll win." She added arrogantly.

"Definitely not!" Autumn snapped. "The Dynasty does not fight. Dark, leave now. Take the rabbit if you must. But do not come back ever again."

Dark cast one last look at the Dynasty before sneering. "You've just shown me your weakness. I'll be back, and it'll be soon. And when I come back, every one of you will wish that you hadn't made me leave!"

A/N-

I didn't even notice, but my chapters are getting longer! I don't think thats a bad thing, but i want them to be consistent, so i'll be changing my limits from 1000-1200 to 1000-1500. And perhaps in the next book, it will continue to rise!

Autumn's Promise - Chapter 9

Autumn watched with a heavy heart as life continued. Life had become normal again. The cats had recovered with the shock of Dark's betrayal and were convinced that he would be leaving.

Autumn was not so sure. In the moon she had spent with him, she had learned he was relentless, cruel and would always keep his word. The days kept getting darker until one night, it was stormy and raining.

He's going to do something, Autumn thought as she stumbled over to the nursery. Inside, she shook herself, careful to not get the other cats wet. Once dry, she curled up with Moon and fell into dreams.

The next day, Autumn was up at dawn, feeling the wind drift into the nursery. Poking her head out to tell the guards on duty to go get some rest, she saw with a shock that both Flash and Shadow, who had been on guard, were injured, their pelts drenched in blood.

Now extremely worried, Autumn nosed Moon to wake her up.

All she felt was empty space.

Moon was gone, and Autumn had a suspicion of who had taken her. After all, who was sly and cocky enough to creep through their camp, injure the two very awake guards, and kitnap Moon? Pounce. Dark's favorite method of torture. While they had been staying in the Dynasty, Pounce had tortured a mouse by shredding its skin off while not killing it. She had pierced its flesh and watched its blood flow out.

And she had been purring. Her eyes had been wild with joy. Autumn shook herself, aware that she was wasting time. Now, she was feeling suddenly angry.

Dark dared to mess with my family. He will regret it.

"Where is she? Where is she?!" Autumn roared, upending the nursery.

"Autumn, calm down," Night Sky mewed soothingly, his tail on her flank, but his eyes were filled with worry.

Autumn froze as she spotted something that confirmed her suspicions. A hole torn in the back of the den, reeking of Pounce.

"Dark has taken my kit!" Autumn yowled her grief to the sky.

"You need to take care of the Clan," Wild Wind reminded her.

Autumn stood before her Clan, her gaze cast on the ground. "Dark has taken Moon, and we must take her back!"

A sounding cheer from the cats below warmed her and she immediately started sending out search patrols.

Autumn led a patrol, Wild Wind, Sky, Ripple and Mountain at her side. She tracked the scent quickly, following it through the bushes. Her heart leapt as she saw a puddle of red.

It was blood.

Autumn must have blacked out, as when she woke, she was back in the medicine den. "Moon?" she croaked out, upset.

Wild Wind appeared, lying next to her. "We didn't find her. The scent trail stopped. Deer's patrol didn't find anything either."

"What about Fawn's?" Autumn demanded.

"They found a trail of blood that led them to some scratches on a tree and some of Moon's fur," Wild Wind sighed. "Night Sky is distraught."

"We must lead more patrols!" Autumn struggled to stand up. "I'll go out again! I'll do anything!"

"You must stay here," Wild Wind mewed sternly. "The Dynasty needs its leader."

Autumn gave in and sank into her nest, closing her eyes.

Moon let out a wail of terror as Dark advanced on her, his shiny claws gleaming under the moonlight. "I am going to kill you," he hissed menacingly.

Moon scrambled back to find herself cornered against a tall tree.

"Help! Mother! Father!" she yowled.

Autumn woke with a shock. It was moonhigh. Was her dream true?

Her heart pounding, she left the den. She padded to the guard's den, picking a select few cats. Fawn, Mountain, Ripple and Wild Wind responded immediately. Then, she woke Deer and Night Sky.

With her patrol, she led them out of the forest explaining her dream and her dream about the fire.

Deer gave her a knowing nod while Wild Wind mewed, "I trust you. Did the dream tell you where she was?"

"Yes. She's at the tallest tree in the forest!" Autumn's heart began to race as they ran towards the tree.

They arrived to see Dark lunging at Moon. Autumn's eyes widened and she sprang at the tom, her claws unsheathed and battering his pelt. A red haze clouded her vision and she clawed his fur out, biting him savagely. Around her, she could dimly see and hear the guards fighting while the hunters hang back, unsure of what to do.

Dark had recovered from his shock and was fighting back now. His strength was massive, and his eyes were glazed with bloodlust.

He's crazy.

His claws rained down on her and Autumn did everything she could to block them, but it wasn't any use. She got a scratch down her flank and a nick on her ear. Desperate, she used all her remaining energy to lunge at him until she pinned him down. *Die! You piece of fox-dung!*

Prepared to slit his throat, she felt a cat at her shoulder stop her.

It was Deer.

"Autumn! Dynasty cats do not kill!" the deputy mewed, shocked.

Autumn fell back, afraid of what had come over her.

I wanted to kill him.

"I'm letting you go," Autumn threatened before letting herself be ushered away by Deer. Night Sky already had Moon in his jaws and his eyes were swimming with relief.

On closer inspection, Autumn could see Moon was trembling and her body was covered with dirt and ugly half-healed scratches. Another pang of anger shook her, and she almost turned around to go after Dark.

Control yourself.

A victorious yowl from Dark made her furious. "I will still be back, Autumn! I promise you; I won't stop until the Dynasty is gone!"

Autumn was emotionless as the other Dynasty cats congratulated the patrol for overcoming Dark.

Autumn didn't cheer with them as they found Moon was safe.

Autumn didn't feel anything except for anger. She felt a strong desire to rip his pelt apart, to shred his ears and to kill him.

Not even Moon and Night Sky could make her happy.

All she felt was a desire of revenge.

And she would be getting it. For Dark had promised he would come back.

And I want that now. I want to kill him.

Here's an extra chapter! Only two chapters or so left!

Autumn's Promise - Chapter 10

Autumn tucked Moon closer to her, sighing. The memory of her kit being stolen still burned in her mind. What if Dark and his Clan came back to take her again? What if they took Night Sky, or Wild Wind, or anyone?

I can't protect them all. At least, not without breaking the laws of the Dynasty. The only way to protect them is to fight Dark but we can't fight. The laws don't allow it.

Autumn paused, caught up in her thoughts.

I suppose the rules can be bended a bit, she let out a mischievous purr.

Gathering her thoughts together, Autumn quickly left Moon with Violet and her kits and leapt onto her favorite rock. Upon seeing her, the Dynasty turned to face her, and she began.

"As you all know," Autumn started a little nervously. "Dark is a major threat to all of us. He took Moon and disobeyed the rules of the Dynasty."

"Hear, hear!" Wild Wind called supportively.

"This is why I believe we should..." Autumn hesitated before sighing. It had to be said. "I believe we should bend the rules of the Dynasty and learn to fight."

A shocked silence met her words before a cat spoke up. It was Deer.

"I don't disagree with you," Deer mewed purposefully. "But I don't want to be on Truth's bad side."

"No, me neither," Autumn agreed. "But I feel like Truth would want us to do this. We wouldn't fight all the time, just until Dark is gone."

Deer still looked troubled. "Can we *ask* Truth?"

"I'm not sure," Autumn admitted before yowling loudly. "Truth! Hear me out! I do not wish to break your rules, but I know Dark is a threat to us. We have to drive him out. White for yes, black for no. Tell me what to do!"

Nothing happened and Autumn lowered her head, feeling a little embarrassed. That was when a bright white light shone on her. She ducked her head while the cats below cheered. A warm feeling settled in her heart and she raised her voice to speak.

"Truth has spoken!" Autumn caterwauled happily. "This means, we will learn to fight. Now, does anyone here know how to fight a cat?"

Only a few cats stood up. These cats were Night Sky, Deer, Fawn and Shadow. Autumn gave a nod. "Alright. I want Fawn to take Talon, Flash and Oak out into the forest. Practice some skills there. Shadow can take Violet, Mountain and Sky to the stream. Ripple, Wild Wind and Storm will go with Night Sky and Deer to the cliffs. Violet, you will take your kits with you. They might be forced to fight as well, even though they are young."

All the cats gave her dips of their heads and swishes of their tails. "I will go with Fawn's patrol. Like Violet, Moon will come with me. We will be learning how to fight on all terrains." Autumn fixed her sharp gaze on the cats. "Everyone will learn."

Some cats grumbled as they set off, namely Oak, Sky and Ripple. Autumn followed Fawn towards the forest.

"Alright," Fawn mewed. "Find a partner."

Autumn paired with Violet, Flash with Oak, Fawn with Talon, Thorn with River and Swift with Moon. Once all the cats were ready, Fawn demonstrated a move.

"This is a basic move that I learnt a couple moons ago," Fawn explained before concentrating on Talon.

Fawn darted forward, extremely low to the ground. She clawed Talon's paw, forcing the brown tabby tom to take a few steps back.

Fawn then shot up and leapt onto his back and raking her claws down Talon's back.

Fawn stepped backwards, pleased with her results. Talon's thick fur was dotted with blood and was clumped messily. Autumn winced before clearing her throat to speak. "Shouldn't we sheathe our claws? We could get badly wounded before the battle."

Fawn let out a sharp hiss. "I was taught that pain helps to kill mistakes," she retorted.

Autumn twitched her ears, nervously eyeing the kits. *What if Moon is injured?*

Fawn caught her glance. "Alright, the kits will sheathe their claws," she grunted.

I don't mind a little pain. I want to kill Dark.

Fawn taught another move, this one a defensive move.

"It's easy, really," Fawn purred. "But if you find yourself to be pinned down, just nip your opponent on the hind leg. That will stop them from reaching for your throat, as they'll be trying to figure out what happened. While they are confused, you should kick them off and claw them."

This time, Fawn didn't demonstrate the move. Perhaps she was listening to Autumn's words.

"I won't hurt you too much," Violet blinked sympathetically at her.

Why does she care?

"Shut up," Autumn snapped. "I didn't ask for your sympathy!"

Violet flinched back; her eyes filled with unease.

I don't want my cats to fear me...but if Dark had feared me, he wouldn't have taken Moon. Excellent. Fear me!

While Autumn had been thinking, Fawn had evidently told the cats

to start. Violet darted at Autumn, clawing her front paws lightly before jumping back. Autumn let out a screech of anger and leapt at Violet, using her sharp claws to catch the larger she-cat's fur, ripping it off. Violet stumbled back in pain and raised her paw to block Autumn's volley of sharp, clumsy, untrained blows.

Autumn tuned in with her instinct, biting, clawing and ducking at the right times. Poor Violet simply could not keep up and lay on the mossy ground, a dozen wounds on her flank and bite marks around her body, exhausted.

Autumn shook her head, clearing some kind of fog that had taken control of her. She examined Violet's body and to her horror, the she-cat was unconscious and bleeding heavily.

The Dynasty can't see what I've done. They'll chase me out!

Uncertainty clouded her judgement and she closed her eyes and brought her claws down onto Violet's neck, imitating a fox's strikes.

I shouldn't be doing this. I'm killing my fellow cat!

Autumn paused before a thought drifted into her mind.

They will chase me out if they know. I can't let them know. I'll have no home. The Dynasty is everything that I've known. Moon and Night Sky won't come with me. They'll abandon me. Wild Wind will leave me. Help me, Truth!

To her surprise, a white light drifted onto her. Perhaps it was a trick of the sunlight, or it was really Truth telling her it was the right decision, but Autumn gave in and let her rage at Dark take hold of her. She brought her claws down onto Violet's neck, killing the she-cat in one, swift blow.

A loud gasp made her spin around guiltily. Deer was standing there, her jaw open as she took in the scene.

It must be really suspicious. I'm covered in Violet's blood and she's dead in front of me.

"Did you...kill her?" Deer's voice was shaky, and her eyes were

fearful.

"I'm sorry!" Autumn wailed. "I couldn't control myself!"

Deer's gaze darted around nervously. "I won't tell anyone if you don't kill me," she trembled.

Autumn felt hopelessness and she fell to the ground. "Alright," she mewed bitterly. "Why have you come?"

Deer struggled to speak as she recounted what had happened. "When we got back, we couldn't find you two. So, we went to look for you. And here I am. I found you..."

"Look, I promise not to kill you. Please don't tell anyone," Autumn pleaded.

Deer gave a curt nod, her eyes cold. "From this moment on, we aren't friends anymore."

"We shouldn't be." Autumn whispered.

Two moons later...

Autumn stretched, padding out of the nursery. Thorn, River and Swift were already wrestling around on the stones, practicing and showing off their skills. The cats had crowded around them, cheering them on.

Autumn couldn't join them.

Guilt had haunted her in every waking moment and in every dream. In her dreams, all she could hear was Violet's voice, tracking her down. A flash of silver claws would appear then she would wake up. While she was awake, Autumn could almost hear Violet's soft voice calling to her.

Auutumnnn...

Auutumnnn...

"Autumn!"

A loud, real yowl shook her awake. She snapped to reality, raking her gaze over the camp. To her horror, Dark and his friends had snuck in. A battle had already started, and Autumn launched herself into the midst of it, searching for Dark desperately.

"Where are you, you thieving, cowardly fox-heart?!" Autumn yowled.

The black tom sneered at her; his claws covered in blood. Autumn could smell whose it was. It was Night Sky's.

Terrified, Autumn searched the battle until she found Night Sky's body. The tom was still alive, and Storm was dragging him to the healer's den. Autumn helped the healer before joining the battle again.

No time for fear. Time for anger.

Autumn found herself against Pounce. The calico she-cat was fast, darting in and out before Autumn could use her strength to claw her. The arrogant she-cat kept taunting her and Autumn was reminded of the day when she had killed Violet.

I taunted her...didn't I?

Without knowing, Autumn had already caught the small she-cat, her claws tearing her pelt to shreds. With a glimmer of satisfaction, Autumn snapped Pounce's neck, dropping her limp body to the ground.

It's just one kill. I'll be fine. I'm not a murderer. Autumn told herself, trying to rid herself of the guilt.

I was happy that she died...

"RevengeClan! Retreat! It's not worth it!" Dark's yowl sounded over the ravine.

"You better not be back!" Autumn flashed her teeth.

"I won't until I've built myself an army!" Dark caterwauled before disappearing into the tunnel.

Autumn's Promise - Epilogue

Three moons later...

Autumn purred, licking Moon on the head fondly. Moon was six moons old and already, she was boisterous and beginning to help the Dynasty. The battle with Dark had cost them many cats. Flash, Talon, Shadow and Storm had been killed. Storm had been trying to save Sky when Dark had brutally murdered him, and as a result, Sky had not survived either.

Dark's healer, Water That Trickles Off Cliff, had stayed behind. She had told Autumn that she had disagreed with the idea of attacking the Dynasty and had left Dark.

Autumn had trusted her and renamed her to Silver Light. Wild Wind and Silver Light had fallen immediately for each other and Silver Light had given birth to three beautiful kittens. She and Wild Wind had named the first kit, who was born at dawn, Spark of Dawn, after Autumn and Wild Wind's mother, the second kit, which had been born at sunset, Ember of Sunset, after Ember, and the third kit had been named Midnight Eclipse, after Eclipse. Midnight Eclipse had been born at midnight.

I can never forgive myself for killing Violet, and perhaps Pounce, but I can learn. Even leaders make mistakes.

That night, Autumn had a dream.

Autumn strolled towards the exit of the ravine, prepared to clamber out. Suddenly, a black she-cat with silver markings and light blue eyes tumbled in, followed by five other cats. One of them was a ginger she-cat with amber eyes.

It couldn't be, but this cat matched Eclipse's descriptions of Dawnmist.

"Are you Dawnmist?" the words were blurted from Autumn's mouth.

The ginger she-cat blinked in surprise. "Yes, I am."

"Why are you here?" Autumn demanded. "Aren't you from a different group of cats?"

"I'm from the Clans," the black she-cat mewed in a soft voice. "Raven-someone told me that I should tell you that I killed Dark."

A pause.

"You killed Dark?" Autumn froze.

"Why? Was he important to you? Because he seemed like an evil cat to me," a silver and tan calico she-cat with green eyes mewed.

"No. He's my life-long enemy. I'm glad he's dead." Autumn forced a purr.

Why aren't I happy?

Autumn leapt out of her nest, extremely worried. Was that dream true? Her dream about the fire had come true...

Autumn shook the thoughts out of her head and concentrated on the positives.

I have a happy family. I lost loved ones, but I have gotten over it.

I am happy and that is all that matters.

A/N HIIIII EVERYONE!

This has been the longest story i've written (even though it's three but we don't talk about that), and I wanted to thank you all for supporting this by reading those chapters and voting. I see all your comments and votes; if i don't reply or anything it doesn't mean i haven't seen it. This book has been amazing for me and I'm very proud of it.

If you've read this from the start to end, I wanted to give you a big thanks. It's been extremely hard to write at some times with blocks and mind blanks, but it's been finished with your help. When I started to write this, I didn't think i'd finish it, but

here I am, writing this A/N, with all 37? 38? chapters published and finished. So - thank you all!

Lucky_Writing